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The Effects of Social Constraints on Peer Evaluation.

Charlotte Mcinnis Curtis
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON PEER EVALUATION

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Charlotte McInnis Curtis
B.A., University of New Orleans, 1978
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1990
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PREFACE

Peer evaluation groups are a powerful instrument in the current pedagogical movement to de-center the classroom and encourage students to take a more active role in their education. To use this technique effectively in a college composition class, students must be taught to read with a critical eye and to participate in a writing dialogue.

Despite the laudable goals of group activity, many instructors express apprehension about this pedagogical method for a variety of reasons. Sometimes instructors are reluctant to use the strategy because they are unfamiliar with peer work procedures or because their past attempts to incorporate peer work into the classroom have failed. Some teachers are also loath to use peer work because they question whether students possess (or can be trained to acquire) the critical skills necessary to evaluate their peers' essays. Beyond the question of the students' critical competence, some instructors remain unconvinced that peer evaluation improves the quality of writing of either the student writer or the student evaluator.

My own classroom investigations with peer groups did not satisfactorily answer these issues, but instead provided me with an additional conundrum: why did some members of functioning groups (in which all members

provided written feedback, participated in the group's discussion, and exhibited congenial group behavior) show little improvement in their own writing as the semester progressed, while the writing of some students saddled with noncooperative peers improved? While it is impossible to define conclusively the role peer evaluations play in the improvement of student writers, they are surely (in conjunction with classroom lectures/discussions, textbooks, supplemental readings, and cognitive maturation) one of the major factors in such improvement.

My interest in peer groups intensified when Joan Clement, a nursing student, enrolled in my Fall 1990 section for her third attempt at Freshman composition. She had withdrawn from the course on two previous occasions because of her tremendous writing anxiety. Despite her trepidation when writing, Ms. Clement was not hesitant about verbal expressions of her views in class discussions. In fact, because of the self assurance she exhibited in class (in addition to the strength of her early writing samples) I placed her in a group in which she was the only woman. Because she was the best writer in the three member group, I assumed she would emerge as its leader; she far exceeded expectations.

Ms. Clement quickly developed an astute critical eye when reading the work of her peers. Her ability to provide

cogent commentary was quickly recognized by not only the other members of her group but the other students in the class. As a result, students from other groups frequently asked her to read and comment upon their drafts. Unfortunately, Ms. Clement's skill seemed to intimidate the men in her own peer group; perhaps her commentary was so expert that they did not feel qualified to comment on the work of such a paragon.

Consequently, Ms. Clement felt short-changed by the evaluation experience. She complained that she took the evaluation task seriously and read her peers' papers with a critical eye to improve their work (and their grades); therefore, she could not understand how they could accept her detailed comments and give her little more than monosyllabic responses on her drafts in return.

As might be anticipated, the recipients of Ms. Clement's remarks received a big boost toward revision of their papers; they valued her comments and used most of her suggestions (to the considerable improvement of their final drafts). What could not have been anticipated, however, was that despite the fact that she received very little useable revision advice from the members of her group, Ms. Clement's final drafts were also greatly improved.

From my reading of the relevant literature, I knew that existing investigations of peer work focused upon the

effect that group participation had upon the student writer. Such research provided an explanation for why the men in Ms. Clement's group improved, but it did not explain what I came to consider the *Clement Effect*—the improvement that occurred in the writing of a skilled peer evaluator, even when that evaluator was in a group which did not reciprocate his/her efforts.

I maintained contact with this student, following her progress in subsequent English classes. After earning a "B" in English 1001, Ms. Clement went on to make a "B" in her remaining English composition classes (the second semester of Freshman composition and Business Writing) as well as in a literature survey course. At my invitation, she returned to my class in a subsequent semester to conduct a training session for peer evaluators.

To my surprise, she arrived at the training session with copies of a handout she had written, which explained the steps she followed in evaluating drafts. These instructions did more than explain her philosophy of peer evaluation, they demonstrated her new sense of confidence in her writing/critical abilities. Ms. Clement credited the self-assurance she derived from writing peer evaluations with her enhanced composition abilities.

While other previously mentioned factors for this improved writing ability may not be conclusively ruled out, neither can the effect of writing peer evaluations upon the evaluator be discounted. The experience of working with Ms. Clement taught me that students can teach themselves about writing; it made me want to study peer evaluations to discover the cause of the Clement Effect.

This dissertation is the result.

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Writers unable to improve their own work benefit when an outside reader suggests revision strategies, but what constraints shape the advice students give? This research presents a descriptive/naturalistic study of how students in one composition class viewed peer evaluation. The research explores how students' expectations of the procedure shape their comments and presents a system to code comments for revision/praise content.

It considers nine editors' responses to the same essays. The Flower et al. three-part self-revision categories were modified and expanded to code editors' comments: those that referenced an essay's basic features ("thesis") were coded *revision level* (RL) 1; comments that offered a diagnosis of the problem ("Introduction needs to be clearer") were coded *revision level* (RL) *2;* and advice that offered specific revision strategies ("… separate into general sentences instead of throwing all … facts into one") were coded *revision level* (RL) *3.*

The current study also presents a three-tier taxonomy of praise which coded interchangeable, ambiguous peer feedback ("good!") as *praise level (PL) 1;* comments that targeted an aspect of the essay ("introduction was good,")

as *praise level (PL) 2;* while comments that referenced a specific element of the essay ("… good point when she asks the question 'Is worrying about grades really worth it?'") were coded *praise level (PL) 3.*

Of 525 revision comments, 217 were coded RL 1; 177 RL 2; and 131 RL 3. Students wrote 117 PL comments: 49 PL 1; 55 PL 2; and 13 PL 3. Forty-one percent (266 of 642) of the comments were written at the lowest comment level (RL or PL 1).

Editors' awareness of evaluation's social aspects controlled the length, content, and tone of their comments. End-of-semester questionnaires revealed that writers' suspicions were aroused by brief comments, even if the comments were positive; this indicates that writers needed to be convinced of the editors' sincerity/competence before the comments could be accepted. Editors tempered their comments according to their perception of the social ramifications of evaluation. The results highlight the importance of praise and the effect evaluation's social dimension exerts upon peer evaluators.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter sets up my study of peer group dynamics and locates it within the existing rhetoric and composition literature. The study focuses on the social constraints of writing in the composition classroom; specifically, it explores how differing perceptions of the social purposes of writing, as well as divergent levels of rhetorical competence and critical skill, can influence peer group dynamics. The 43 participants in the study were second-semester freshmen enrolled in a persuasive writing course; all were members of peer evaluation groups.

1.1 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Peer work in composition studies is a loosely defined concept which makes its investigation problematic. For instance, different terms are often used to discuss student groups, partially because individual researchers use such groups for different activities. For example, some instructors employ peer groups for tasks connected to prewriting activity (such as to discuss, research, or explore topics for future essays), while others utilize group activities only to comment upon or proofread final drafts. Consequently, it is not a simple matter to

investigate peer work; studies grouped together under the rubric *peer work* may emphasize different aspects of group work. Therefore, each study must be analyzed to determine its suitability to a specific peer group situation.

Such divergent uses of peer groups further complicate research because researchers use various terms to refer to group work. The variations usually reflect the purpose for which the researcher has employed groups; therefore, a composition investigator who is interested in how groups are used to explore a topic might refer to them as ***discussion groups***, while those who study groups engaged in a variety of pursuits might prefer the generic term ***student groups***. Other researchers index group work under terms such as ***response groups***, ***writing circles***, or ***workshops***, while some simply lump all student-to-student activities under ***peers*** or ***groups***.

My study uses the term ***peer group*** to describe groups of students reading/commenting upon written drafts of other students within the same class. This study is limited to factors that influence small/large student groups providing oral/written revision feedback for other students within the same class. Students in the class were engaged in two types of writing activities: drafts directed to the teacher; and comments directed to their peers. Therefore,

some distinction had to be drawn between these writing activities. Accordingly, students commenting upon the work of other students are designated as ***editors***, while a student whose work is being commented upon will be referred to as the ***writer***.

In addition to terminological difficulties, peer studies are problematic for another reason: how can a researcher determine the effect peer work has upon students? Improved writing may result from factors within the composition classroom other than peer evaluation (such as class discussions/lectures, the text, and supplemental readings) or may occur as the result of forces outside the classroom (discussions with friends/family or normal cognitive maturation). While it may be impossible to quantify what component or combination of components is responsible for better writing, the effect of peer evaluations can not be discounted.

Social Aspects of Peer Evaluation

Past research efforts frequently have not explored fully the social aspects of peer evaluation. For example, composition instructors sometimes prompt students to remember that (most) writing is a social activity which "is indispensable to society … [because h]uman beings are social animals and use language … to make sense of the

world" (Lindemann, 6); to the teacher, this comment signals that the essence of writing is communication between a reader and a writer. While the meaning of the tenet may be clear to the composition expert/teacher, often the word *social* has different connotations for students; if a student's understanding of *social* is limited to friend-making activity, he/she is unlikely to offer editorial comments that could jeopardize comradeship with other group members.

In this research, discussion of ***social*** repercussions will refer to students' perceptions of how they fit into the group. The terms ***revision,*** and ***revise*** are used to discuss comments and actions targeted to the communicative aspects of writing.

Other instructions commonly given in peer evaluation exercises may present student evaluators with additional interpretative difficulties. For example, some instructors inform students that the purpose of peer work is to *help* another student improve his/her writing; however, students often find this direction to be as ambiguous a term as *social*. Although the teacher's advice is meant to focus student efforts on improved writing, some students think the best way to help a peer is to provide positive feedback. This miscommunication can lead to groups in which

the students' (unstated) goal is not better writing habits but group congeniality.

Obviously, students' interpretations of *social* and *help* (as well as *evaluation*) significantly influence how they approach the peer evaluation task. One of the first decisions editors in this study had to make was whether to give revision advice to address the writing task's communicative aspects, or to ignore an essay's difficulties rather than jeopardize classroom camaraderie. If an editor chose to focus on writing's communicative rather than comradely aspects, he/she faced another set of decisions: was an editor to serve as a master-proofreader, or should he/she concentrate on problems of organization and style instead?

This research presents a descriptive/naturalistic study of how different members of peer groups in one Freshman Composition class viewed the evaluation process; it examines how the rhetorical/technical skill each editor possessed shaped the advice he/she offered peers. It considers the comments of individual editors and compares them with other responses to the same essays. Perhaps most interestingly, the research explores factors that influence peer comments; it investigates how fear of offense affects the editorial advice students give their peers. It examines

the varied critical abilities of students within the groups and the effect critical acuity exerted upon student behavior.

This research was not undertaken to argue the pedagogical superiority of peer evaluation but rather to learn more about this instructional method. Instructors often use peer evaluation techniques without full comprehension of the theories behind group work. Through observing a veteran composition teacher who incorporated group activities, I hoped to fuse theory and practice to discover what students thought about peer evaluation and its effect upon the classroom dynamic.

Why Study Peer Groups?

Although peer research (and peer work itself) can be difficult, it is a worthy subject of study because of the potential of the practice. One such effect may be enhancement of some students' critical thinking skills. Lee Odell (1977) and Linda Flower (1994) suggest a link between composition and cognitive ability. As Odell finds, recent composition studies imply that

> 1 Composition teachers can help students increase their conscious use of certain intellectual (cognitive and affective) processes.
> 2 Instruction in the use of these processes can result in writing that seems more mature, more carefully thought out, more persuasive (107).

Flower's book, *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning* (1994), provides an explanation for this increased composition-based cognition.

Flower argues that as students *negotiate* a writing assignment, they must first interpret the task. She defines this negotiation as how a writer "reads the context of writing, interprets the expectations of others, defines the meaning of key words … , [and] envisions his or her role as a writer" (*Construction*, 75). Flower found that by going through this interpretative prewriting process, some students could "perform academic tasks they had not [previously] attempted or realized were expected" (76). Thus, she finds that writing facilitates cognition.

Flower's findings about cognition have interesting implications for peer work. To borrow Flower's terminology, a student editor must first *negotiate* both the original writing task and the evaluation exercise as conceived by the teacher in order to successfully complete an evaluation.

In the peer evaluation setting, a misreading of teacher intentions would frustrate effective evaluation attempts. To participate productively in the process, a student must have attained ***critical literacy***—the facility to blend reading and writing to achieve "well-articulated

educational goals [which] … involve high levels of independent thinking" (Richardson et al., 5). This level of literacy is demonstrated by the ability to assimilate the original writing assignment and the evaluation prompt, as well as previous writing instruction to write an accurate (yet tactful) evaluation. Due to the complexity of the evaluation task, what might be considered a type of ***basic literacy***—the ability to read a text and write an accurate grammatical summary—is not sufficient for a competent evaluator.

1.2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Most literature concerned with peer studies can be broken down into two basic categories: 1) studies that consider the social significance of peer work; and 2) studies that attempt to categorize some aspect of group work (level of student involvement, successful/unsuccessful writers, revision strategies/abilities, etc.).

Social Significance of Peer Work

While peer evaluations benefit writers by providing feedback that should aid revision, the editors profit also from the procedure because learning to read with a critical eye develops a sense of audience. As Carol Kanar advises students in *The Confident Writer*

> In your writing class you become part of a new community of writers. As such, you learn from each

> other, and build each other's confidence. To do this you must enter into the writing experience with a willingness to share ideas about what you read and write. After all, writing exists for an audience to read (27).

This heightened sense of audience stems from hearing others in the group respond to a piece of writing; peer activity allows students to experience differing responses to the same essays and begin to develop the concept that everyone in the group will not respond to their writing in the same way. Peer evaluation is an especially appropriate activity in a persuasive writing course because peer work helps students to develop counter-argument strategies as they listen to their peers' views on a topic.

While participation in a peer group does help students see themselves as part of a community of writers, unfortunately, the community of writers they invent is often not the same as that envisioned by their instructor. While their instructor wants to develop a community of writers aware of the communicative power of the written word, the students in a peer group may be overwhelmed by a more immediate sense of the social ramifications of the writing act: Will their writing offend someone in the group, or (perhaps worse for an adolescent writer) will the reader misunderstand the work and assume the writer is unconnected to the community?

One of the earliest advocates of peer work, Kenneth Bruffee, addresses this activity as a socializing tool in his essay, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" (1984). In the essay, Bruffee describes academic discourse as a "conversation" in which

> [teachers] … as members of our chosen disciplines and also members of the community of the liberally educated public at large, invite and encourage (students) to join.

According to Bruffee, teachers are the guardians of this "conversation" and must "accept the responsibility for introducing new members into the community"(650).

Bruffee endorses peer work as the best method to introduce students to the conversation of academic discourse; his endorsement of peer work is shared by Doug Hunt in *Teaching With a Purpose* (1984). Hunt offers valuable guidance for peer group formation; he warns that a writing teacher cannot assign students to peer evaluation groups and expect them to immediately begin to evaluate drafts. Before groups begin to read each other's work, students must be trained to offer criticism that will be frank, yet tactful.

Karen Spear's book, *Sharing Writing* (1988) provides additional insights into peer group dynamics. She concurs with Hunt that peer groups will not function effectively unless teachers train students in the process of evaluation

and provide models for effective evaluation before students attempt the procedure. Spear imputes unproductive peer groups not to a lack of subject matter comprehension but to a lack of interpersonal skills. She asserts that it is not enough for teachers to provide writing instruction and then place students in groups haphazardly, hoping that they will help each other improve their composing processes. Both Hunt and Spear agree that teachers who hope to make effective use of peer groups in their writing classes must also provide instruction in group dynamics if they expect productive group work; Hunt suggests that teachers provide criteria during the initial phase of instituting peer feedback to provide novice evaluators with an evaluative framework (Spear, Preface; Hunt, 1984).

Larry Michaelson's essay "Team Learning in Large Classes" (in *Learning in Groups*, 1983) warns that groups should not be formed based on seating patterns, since these patterns often reflect pre-existing social groups. He explains that this occurs because most students sit by people they already know; therefore, if groups are formed based on student-selected seating patterns, some groups will contain some students with extant friendships. Michaelson warns that while such pre-existing friendships may make for immediate group congeniality, prior

relationships between some members of the group may "impede" the ultimate cohesiveness of the group as a whole.

Michaelson suggests that teachers form groups with varied academic abilities and social backgrounds. If teachers fail to do so, and opt for either student-selected groups or groups based on seating arrangements, cliques based on pre-existing friendships within the groups are likely.

Josephine Koster Tarvers (1988) acknowledges the influence that social factors exert on groups; she provides practical advice for group structure and formation which corresponds closely to that given by Spear and Hunt.

> The composition of small groups requires care on your part. Somehow, you have to mix strong and weak students, aggressive and shy ones, in cells of three or four students who will work together and help each other (39).

Tarvers is aware that even carefully-structured groups can stray from the evaluation task at hand. She offers a list of sample questions to use in initial group sessions, warning that instructors must "monitor discussion carefully to make sure it hasn't veered around to a sociology exam or a Bon Jovi concert .... [D]on't let them gossip or waste time" (39-41). Because she is aware also of how teacher/student social dynamics can impede group function, Tarvers reminds her (novice-teacher) audience

> You're the authority in the classroom; you need to exert control .... Sometimes you'll have to crudely remind them that the quality of their working performance will influence their grades; that usually gets their attention (41).

She offers a one-page sample student handout describing writing groups and their function.

Erika Lindemann's *Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* also acknowledges the need to consider the social elements of peer critiquing before beginning peer work. She warns that if students are not provided with some type of evaluation training prior to attempting group work, their advice may be too confrontational.

> ...[S]tudents aren't accustomed to working in groups. They're used to lectures and at least initially need specific directions for using their time in groups constructively .... When students "play teacher," they often adopt the hypercritical, authoritative tone of the comments they've read on their papers .... we must structure group carefully, stating our expectations clearly (195-196).

Lindemann also gives clear guidelines for setting up writing groups. She advises that the groups be made up of no more than three members; that groups have clearly delineated tasks (i.e. examine/rewrite the first paragraph collaboratively); that students be given a "language for discussing their work"; and that the teacher monitor the groups to ensure that groups remain on-task.

Although the work of Donald Daiker (1989) is concerned with comments from teachers rather than peers, his work

raises a component that is often ignored in discussions of evaluation—the importance of praise. Daiker examines the language of teacher/student comments and echoes Lindemann's call for an evaluation lexicon. He urges instructors to "[allow] students to experience success with writing" by providing "praise … as a motivator of student writing" (106-107). He cites previous composition research (Dragga, 1986; Christensen 1962; Diederich, 1974) in support of his argument that teacher-provided praise results in improved student writing. Although he argues in favor of positive comments, Daiker admits that "praise does not flow readily from the marking pens of writing teachers; it must be learned" (107).

Although group work is not a variable in his research, Daiker's study of the effect of praise upon student writing is relevant to the current study. Obviously, his observation that praise is an acquired rather than instinctive instructional strategy has implications for peer evaluation. His research suggests that the pre-evaluation preparation advocated by Bruffee, Spear, and Lindemann should also include instruction in how to praise as well as criticize peers.

To better instruct students and understand how students approach the evaluation task, it is wise to review several current composition texts written for students,

since these texts exert a direct influence on student perceptions of peer evaluation. It is fortunate that texts written for composition instructors provide teachers with guidance for group activity because often books written for students give little straightforward assistance to student evaluators; typically writing textbooks allude to draft revision based on peer comments but offer little practical advice on how to conduct an effective peer evaluation. The advice ignores the social considerations that influence peer comments since most advice is directed toward the writer/recipient of the advice, rather than to the editor/evaluator.

The most recent edition of the *St. Martin's Guide to Writing (1991)* avoids this pitfall by suggesting that after writing a draft the student should

> … show it to someone else for comments and advice on how to improve it. Expert writers often seek advice from others.
>
> To evaluate someone else's draft, you need to read writing with a critical eye. You must be both positive and skeptical—positive in that you are trying to identify what is workable and promising in the draft, skeptical in that you need to question the writer's assumptions and decisions … When you read someone's writing critically, you learn more about writing … By sharing your reactions and analysis you complete the circle of community (14-15).

Unlike many student texts, *The St. Martin's Guide* acknowledges the vast difference between a student's reading his/her own work and that of another writer.

Tangible proof of this consideration of the social aspects of writing is the *Guide*'s corroboration of Daiker's injunction to praise; it reminds student evaluators to search for portions of the draft to *praise*—"what is workable and promising in the draft"—as well as *criticize*—"you need to question the writer's assumptions and decisions"—when providing feedback.

Tilly Warnock's *Writing is Critical Action*, another composition text for students, emphasizes peer work. Warnock exhorts her audience to "Read your draft aloud to students in a small group" (21) or to "Share the final draft … with your group" (26). She strongly advocates peer readers because

> … [W]orking in groups is the best way to help you become a writer and a critical reader of your own writing. By reading drafts aloud … you elicit responses from others which often are varied, even contradictory, so that you the writer, the final authority, must … figure out what to do.… The going is rough at times, … but spoken and written participation in the conversation at hand is what it means to be human (11).

Warnock provides two pages of specific advice to students working in both large and small groups; she asserts that the dynamics within a small group evolve as the members become accustomed to the practice (and to the others in the group). Her advice acknowledges the necessity of *praise* in the editor/writer dialogue; however, she implies that the

need for praise decreases as a writer's confidence increases.

> At first you may want encouragement [praise] about your ideas and then about your development of ideas and your voice. But *after a while* you will *want* constructive criticism and suggestions about specific features, such as your sentences and words.... [T]he overall purpose of group work is to help you develop your writer and your reader self and to help you gain competence and confidence in revising your own drafts [emphasis mine] (151).

Her advice is useful for a student audience because she expects students will develop "competence and confidence" as both writers and editors, although she seems to imply that the need for praise decreases as students become more confident writers. It is interesting that her remarks allow students to construe that an editor can either praise or criticize an essay but cannot do both; her advice is also useful because of her emphasis upon the need to offer specific comments. Her belief that a small group audience is an effective way to achieve confidence as a writer undergirds Warnock's text.

Such increased confidence may occur because peer groups help student writers/editors develop more authentic voices since the group situation more closely replicates "real-world" writing conditions. Because participants are aware that someone other than their teacher will be reading the work, they carefully consider the attitudes of their (peer) readers. Therefore, students in such groups are less

likely to resort to what writer Ken Macrorie calls *Engfish* "the phony pretentious language of the schools" (*Telling Writing* 1).

Macrorie finds that students are keenly aware of the social aspects of writing; writers in a peer group instinctively change the way they write because they are afraid of what the other students might say. He finds that students are quick to take other students to task if the writer adopts a pompous style to impress the teacher. Macrorie argues that students writing for their peers develop a more authentic voice, thus making their writing more interesting.

Geoffrey Sirc is also concerned with the issue of voice, albeit not from Macrorie's perspective. While Macrorie sees groups as a powerful way to build a sense of community, Sirc claims that the language used in peer groups can also destroy group cohesiveness. He asserts that women write in a *feminine* style of less task-serious play and emotion. According to Sirc, this style of commentary "ruptures … the structure " of the writing classroom (8). He claims that the language of peer groups is *masculine* and combative; therefore, women must sacrifice their femininity to participate in peer groups successfully.

Despite Macrorie's advocation of peer work as a way to avoid *Engfish*, Sirc finds that group work fosters the "phony classroom atmosphere of peer evaluations" (Sirc 1991) and blames Kenneth Bruffee for the fact that peer groups are structured around the idea that "our classrooms are … homogeneous" (Sirc 1991). This concept of a homogeneous classroom assumes that all students have common experiences and ways of expressing themselves regardless of age, class, or gender. Sirc argues that, far from being alike, male and female students live

> … in two worlds which occasionally coincide but which just as often don't. Hence, though there may be times when collaboration works as well as advertised, times when gender is not so prominent, there are certainly … times of conflict, incomprehension, submission (1991).

In light of Sirc's argument that groups are inherently masculine in structure, it is interesting to read George Hillock's survey of composition research; the 1985 study offers support that peer groups are effective ways to teach writing, at least to males. According to Hillocks' research (which was limited to men) male students who participated in peer response groups showed greater gains in their writing ability than did male students in a traditional lecture environment (159).

Sirc's finding that (what he perceives as) the adversarial nature of peer evaluation groups favors males

is at variance to what I had observed in my own classes (author, unpublished conference paper, 1991). I noted that the sense of authority and empowerment generated within the small group setting made it a positive experience for all students; admittedly, some female students expressed initial anxiety ("I was afraid they would think I was a bitch") about the procedure which parallels what Sirc terms a loss of the *feminine* (author, unpublished conference paper, 1991). Interestingly, I found that my male students were also somewhat nervous about peer evaluation ("I was worried I'd hurt someone's feelings"); I suspect that Sirc's "loss of the feminine" is more accurately a fear of separation from the group. While Sirc's assertions about the adversarial nature of peer evaluation are not without validity, I found that the behavior of both my male and female students more closely paralleled that of Warnock's—as the semester progressed, peer work resulted in a heightened sense of confidence.

As does Sirc, Vicki Byard also examines the dynamics of peer groups in terms of power and control. She, however, does not find the more direct, task-focused style that Sirc labels *masculine* to be a laudable condition. Byard casts her findings in terms of analyzing the use and abuse of power in peer groups, which she claims is an inevitable

consequence of peer work. Unlike Warnock, Byard finds the increased confidence that emerges as a result of peer work can have a negative effect on group interaction. She claims that empowering students as writing authorities conflicts with the cooperation required for successful collaborative work; she asserts that the coercive nature of peer evaluation is in conflict with the cooperation required for collaboration. Students, after all, cannot choose to opt out of the exercise but are compelled to participate.

Byard's findings are particularly interesting to remember when reading Tarvers' instructions to novice teachers. Because Tarvers is concerned (rightly) that students not view peer-time as play-time, much of her advice seems to emphasize the coercive aspects of the practice that Byard finds so disturbing.

Echoing Spear's findings that group work fails not through a lack of rhetorical ability but of social, Byard finds that students confident in their abilities to evaluate are cast as adversarial judges. She finds that frequently students competent in the technical mechanics of composition lack the ability to work with another writer to improve a paper. Byard asserts that such students see evaluation as a monologue rather than a dialogue (or—to

adopt Bruffee's terminology—a *conversation*) between interested parties (1991).

Marion Mohr's study of revision also examines the social implications of empowering students as writing authorities. Although her study examines pre-college writers, many of Mohr's observations about peer groups also ring true for college level (particularly freshman) composition classes. Of special interest is her finding that students are anxious about not only their writing, but about their social position in the class as well. Mohr finds that although students do want commentary on their writing, they want the editor to be sympathetic toward the writer's feelings. In addition, the student editors in her study were sometimes afraid to give legitimate criticism because they feared offending the writer (1984).

Alice Horning's 1987 research finds this same "climate of fear" in the composition classroom; she, however, places her focus on the power of peer groups to overcome a fear of writing. Horning finds that students often receive writing instruction through a *filter* which prevents real learning from occurring. She finds that the filter is lowered when students are trained in a concept and then teach that concept to a small group of peers because the activity builds self-confidence; this allows the student to be more

receptive to additional instruction. Horning claims peer work reduces writing anxiety.

Fear can repress more experienced writers as well. Gesa Kirsch's 1993 *Women Writing the Academy: Audience, Authority, and Transformation* examines some of the difficulties female students and faculty face when writing. Kirsch's work is relevant to the current study because of the emphasis her subjects place upon peer relationships. Although they are affiliated (as either professors or students) with a large, urban university, the subjects of Kirsch's study all report difficulty in learning to write academic discourse; according to Kirsch, academic women are at risk of viewing their "negative writing experiences as direct challenges to their place … in the academy" (67).

Of particular interest to the current study of academic writing, many of the women in Kirsch's study mention writing groups as an effective way to combat their feelings of academic alienation. One of the faculty members in the study asserts that it is really "useful [to have] people that you trust not to be ugly in their criticism" review an article before it is sent out for publication (74). This remark suggests that one benefit of group work is the resultant sense of community and confidence it engenders.

Kirsch's work is also of importance to the current study because it traces the development of audience awareness; she notes the disparity of audience awareness between the female faculty and students. Kirsch finds that the faculty writers are conscious of a multi-leveled community of readers. When drafting an article for publication, most first write for a limited immediate audience of trusted readers (writing group, friends, or spouse); some next imagine an audience of an editor or reviewer for a specific journal; finally, they visualize an audience composed of readers "either in other disciplines or outside the academy" (82-86).

In contrast to this rich awareness of audience, Kirsch finds that both graduate and undergraduate students write for a very specific audience of "professors teaching their courses and themselves" (86). Unlike the faculty writers, who have a keen sense of authorial ownership, student writers in the study report that they surrender authority of their writing to "professors or … people who know already what [they are] talking about" (86).

Varied audiences and their interdependence are also the subject of Lad Tobin's *Writing Relationships: What Really Happens in the Composition Class*. Tobin writes that "establishing, monitoring, and maintaining productive

relationships in the classroom … is the *primary* thing we must do if we want to be successful as writing teachers" (15). He categorizes a variety of relationships within the composition class: teacher-teacher; teacher-student; student-student; and teacher-teacher.

His work is particularly intriguing in view of what other researchers have had to say about the collaborative nature of peer work. Tobin asserts that "we need to go beyond generalized notions of collaboration, discourse communities, and the social construction of knowledge" (15). He finds that peer work has a dual nature—competitive as well as collaborative—a situation he categorizes as beneficial within certain constraints.

> [W]e need to acknowledge not only that students learn from and identify with one another but also that they define themselves *against* their peers; and we need to understand what actually occurs when we divide students into groups … (15).

Tobin writes that "while it is tempting" for an instructor to assume that peer groups reduce competition, reading another student's work "often triggered strong competitive feelings" among his students (107). Nor does he find that competition is limited to students; it affects teachers as well.

One of the most comprehensive studies of peer groups is Anne Ruggles Gere's 1987 study of American writing

groups. She traces the history of such groups from the nineteenth century to the present. She argues that one of the most important functions of group evaluations is that they provide students with a sense of being part of a "literate community." She asserts that participation in these groups dramatically illustrates that writing is a social activity, because it permits students to see how other people in a classroom respond to the same piece of writing whether the group is commenting upon the work of another student or upon a published author (*Writing Groups*).

Summary of social implication literature

From a review of the literature, it is apparent that the social considerations are an important component of group work. Macrorie finds that students in groups instinctively change the way they write because of their concerns about how others perceive them; Sirc claims that such concern places particular stress upon women, while Horner and Kirsch find that groups increase women writers' confidence and decrease anxiety. Hunt, Bruffee, Lindemann, and Spear advocate specialized training for students prior to attempting peer work to alleviate evaluators' anxiety; Daiker and Warnock cite the importance of praise to the evaluation process, and acknowledge the difficulty of

learning how to praise, which Lindemann claims stems from the fact that students model their evaluative comments on those which they receive from their teachers.

Categorization of Peer Work

In addition to this emphasis upon the social significance of peer work, studies often attempt to categorize some aspect of group work (level of student involvement, successful/unsuccessful writers, revision strategies/abilities, etc.). For instance, Walter Lamberg's 1980 article categorizes writing feedback as

> … information on performance which affects subsequent performance by influencing students' attention to particular matters so that these matters undergo a change in the subsequent performance (66).

Feedback may originate from teacher comments or the student him/herself, as well as from peers. Lamberg's research classifies types of feedback into qualitative or quantitative categories. After this initial division, he then divides quantitative comments into three groups: length and development; mechanics; or style. Each of these three is further broken down (for example, the mechanics category calls for students to count the number of correctly spelled words, as well as correctly punctuated sentences).

Lamberg finds peer evaluation to be valuable to the revision process when the teacher has devised "a checklist,

rating scale or other form which covers the skills or qualities to be stressed" (67). He argues that such teacher-provided prompts help students "clarify the assignment; … read, measure, and revise their own papers; and … guide the peer-response activity" (68). Lamberg finds that the process of providing evaluation gives students the opportunity to be "not only recipients of but givers of information" (68). He contends that the evaluation process induces students to "attend to particular aspects of writing, and through that attention, … improve their subsequent compositions" (68).

Nina Ziv (1984) provides a four tier guide for discussion of student writing; although her study is not directly concerned with peer work, it can easily be used to provide editors with the structure they (according to Lamberg and Lindemann) need to conduct peer commentary. Ziv categorizes teacher comments as being at either a *conceptual* (thesis), *structural* (organization), *sentential* (sentences), or *lexical* (word choice) level. Daiker's research on praise suggests that Ziv's categories can be modified to help instructors provide specific praise for student writing, despite his assertion that students "receive even vague compliments … with gratitude and thanksgiving" (111).

Anne Ruggles Gere and Ralph Stevens (1985) also categorize feedback; they study the effect that oral and/or written comments from either the teacher or the writer's peers have upon revision of a draft. Just as Daiker's and Dragga's research reveals, Gere and Stevens' work finds that teacher responses tend to focus on students' "mechanical errors" which may inhibit comprehension, unlike students' oral responses to the drafts which "assume that meaning lies in the constructions they create in their minds while listening to one another read" (104). Gere and Stevens find that a teacher's response to a student text is influenced significantly by the teacher's comparison of the draft to an internalized exemplary text. According to Gere and Stevens, because students are unimpeded by this critical mental template, they are better able to listen to what the student writer has written and will strain to make meaning of the existing draft rather than compare it to an intrinsic meta-text (104). This finding suggests that student evaluators may be more easily trained in the strategy of praise than are their teachers, since they lack the teacher's highly-evolved meta-text.

This finding is somewhat at variance with those of Ellice Forman and Courtney Cazden, who maintain the merit of guided peer work is that it fosters the development of internalized critical standards. They claim the acquisition

of such a heightened sense leads to increased cognitive ability. To achieve this enhanced cognition (as Bruffee, 1984; Hunt, 1984; and Spear, 1988 advocate) Forman and Cazden recommend that teachers model peer evaluation behavior. According to Forman and Cazden, when a teacher furnishes a model focused on higher-order concerns, evaluators internalize these higher-order concerns as they apply them to their peers' work. Evaluators benefit from the role of teacher/critic; in addition, each student writer receives the benefit of many (instead of only one) teacher/reader (*Culture, Communication and Cognition*).

Kathleen Bouton and Gary Tutty concur that writing peer evaluations based on a model can significantly change students' writing abilities. As Bouton and Tutty recognize, no research exists to link improved student writing with teacher-corrected drafts (64). However, they note Eileen Wagner's research that students responsible for grading their peers' papers (following a pre-determined set of criteria) learn more about composition "than all the proofreading and style development exercises" could ever teach (77).

Therefore, Bouton and Tutty adapt Wagner's grading exercise to conform with peer evaluation work. They contend that if students receive no great benefit from (time-

consuming) teacher comments while peer evaluation participation aids writing development, then peer work "combined with occasional teacher corrections accompanied by short student-teacher conferences is a much more valuable and constructive way to evaluate students' papers" (67).

Although Flower and Hayes' 1980 essay "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," has no direct link to group work, it provides an explanation for this increase in cognition and improved writing ability. Their work presents further justification for peer evaluations in the composition classroom. "Cognition" classifies how expert and novice writers interpret and attack a writing assignment; Flower and Hayes state that the use of the term *discovery* to describe either category of writers' creative process is misleading. They claim that

> writers don't *find* meanings, they *make* them. A writer in the act of discovery is hard at work searching memory, forming concepts, and forging a new structure of ideas, while at the same time trying to juggle all the constraints imposed by his or her purpose, audience, and language itself (21).

Their protocol breaks down a rhetorical problem into two main categories (analysis of rhetorical situation; analysis of goals) each having subsets. In striking contrast to the expert writers in the study, Flower and Hayes find that the novice writers spent little composition time considering

how readers might respond to the writing. Flower and Hayes note that "many of our [novice] writers never appeared to develop goals much more sophisticated than … an interior monologue" (28). According to current composition theory, such self absorption is one of the most compelling reasons to conduct peer evaluations in the freshman composition classroom.

Another Flower et al. (1986) essay provides an explanation of why writers respond to the same type of commentary with varied reactions. In their study of the revision processes of experienced and novice writers, Flower and her colleagues note that writers may choose to either *rewrite* or *revise*. A writer who follows the *rewrite* strategy extracts the gist of a draft and uses it as a springboard for a global rethinking of the original topic. For this type of writer, mere detection of a problem area is sufficient information; if a reader indicates he/she has a problem with an area of the draft, the writer may use the original writing to rethink and rewrite.

On the other hand, a writer following the *revise* strategy expects different editorial feedback. Flower et al. describe the revision process for this type of writer as a three-step procedure of "***detecting*** that a problem exists; ***building a diagnostic representation*** of that

problem; and ***selecting a strategy***" to correct the problem (*Detection,* 27). According to Flower and Hayes, revision is a more complex composition strategy because it requires "both skill in reading the text and on the adequacy of one's planning and … repertory of standards" (*Detection,* 29). Writers who follow the *revise* writing strategy often are unable to proceed if they lack the composing resources to select strategies; if such a writer is in an evaluation group with a peer who can suggest revision strategies, this blockage may be resolved.

Another of Flower's earlier essays offers an implicit justification for peer evaluations. The article, "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," examines the (unspoken) interior speech of adults; Flower characterizes inner speech as "highly elliptical" and finds that in it "explicit subjects and referents disappear" (21). Flower also finds that when "talking to oneself … words become 'saturated with sense' and may take on a more complex private meaning; she asserts that interior speech often lacks "logical and causal relationships" (21).

Since developing writers often compose by putting their interior speech on paper, especially if they have been encouraged to see writing as self-expression, often the result is what Flower terms "Writer-Based prose" (21).

She notes that while most people endeavor to take their audience's expectations into account when speaking, "many people simply do not consider the reader when they write" (37). Peer groups encourage greater consideration of the reader because they present a visible audience.

Several other studies are concerned with different aspects of successful peer groups. Elizabeth Sommers' 1991 paper presented at the CCCC provides advice to those interested in peer group dynamics. The study examines all-female peer groups, classifying them into two distinct types—communal (talkative, attentive, student-centered) groups and compliant (reticent, less feedback, teacher-centered) groups. Sommers advocates that teachers facilitate risk-taking attitudes within peer groups. Her research focuses on the cohesiveness of successful groups (1991). Diana George also reports the characteristics of three kinds of peer groups in a writing class, and offers suggestions for the improvement of less-successful groups (1984).

Ronald Barron also offers a list of characteristics among successful groups. Although this work does not attempt to determine the skill level of group participants prior to peer work (i.e., are members of successful peer groups already better writers than those who fail to grasp

peer evaluation concepts) this work does provide a yardstick to judge successful groups (1991).

The work of Joanne Dreshsel (1991) and Kevin Davis (1991) examines the inherent power struggle so often referred to in composition research. Dreshsel's work categorizes what she terms the language of *negotiation* in peer response groups; its main focus is the classification of the language of peer comments (1991). Davis' work also studies issues of power and control within peer groups as evidenced by the language that occurs in the group. His research categorizes four types of conversations (structural comments, solicitations, responses and reactions) within the selected groups and finds that the conversation of the peer group is quite similar to other types of normal conversations.

Summary of classification studies

Studies which attempt to classify peer work offer interesting implications for the practice. Some research categorizes groups according to their behavior; Sommers finds that all-female groups are either communal (greater loyalty to the group) or compliant (greater loyalty to the teacher). George describes three kinds of peer groups and offers suggestions for group improvement; Barron's research offers a set of criteria to evaluate successful groups.

Dreshsel and Davis both categorize the power struggles that often arise in groups; Dreshsel categorizes the language of peer comments, while Davis describes the four types of conversations that he says are typical of those occurring in peer groups. Lamberg classifies both teacher and student feedback into quantitative or qualitative comments; Gere and Stevens also compare teacher and student feedback, implying that teacher comments are more critical than those of students because of teachers' internalized meta-texts. Forman and Cazden's research is organized around students' development of higher/lower order concerns which they maintain fosters development of students' critical abilities; Flower et al. offer a three-step system to classify revision-oriented comments. Bouton and Tutty adapt Wagner's grading exercise to increase students' writing abilities. Their adaptation prompted me to modify the Flower et al. revision categories and to devise a three-tier taxonomy of praise.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on my review of the literature, this study sought answers to the following research questions:

> **1) What are students' perceptions of the social aspects of writing peer commentaries? 2) How do these perceptions differ: (a) between class members; and (b) between students and their teacher?**

These questions were based on previous research (Tobin, Warnock, Kirsch, most notably) which finds varied audiences within the composition classroom. The questions explore the different social conceptions of writing that all the members of a classroom community (including the teacher) bring to peer group discussions. For instance, if the teacher has advised students to consider the writer (of the comments), do editors understand that the instruction is offered to make them aware of the need to cast their revision suggestions in terms that will encourage acceptance, or do they construe the teacher's instruction as an admonishment to avoid group conflict?

3) At which of the three Flower et al. revision levels (detecting; building; selecting) did the students in this study offer comments most often? 4) At which of three praise levels (ambiguous; adjunct; specific) did students offer comments most often?

The second group of questions explores the parameters of students' rhetorical competence, their perceptions of the revision process, and considers the importance of praise. Flower et al. find that writers who revise a draft are unable to improve their own work if they lack the rhetorical ability to devise strategies to correct their writing weaknesses. These same writers may be able to

continue writing if an outside reader suggests revision strategies.

While the Flower et al. three-part self-revision strategy is one with obvious implications for evaluating peer commentary, some modifications were made to adapt the concept to peer evaluations. For instance, because Flower et al. examines writers' revision of their own papers, it therefore makes no provision for complimentary comments. I devised a similar system to code comments in praise of an essay.

If a remark merely provided ambiguous praise that could be interchanged between essays without modification ("good!" "yes," "no changes") it was coded *praise level 1.* Comments that targeted an aspect of the essay ("great background," "introduction was good," "you had a lot of details to back up your ideas") were coded *praise level 2;* comments in reference to a specific aspect of an essay ("… makes a good point when she asks the question 'Is worrying about grades really worth it?'") were coded *praise level 3.*

5) What happens when students' divergent social perceptions and disparate critical abilities converge as they meet in peer groups?

The final question examines what happens at the confluence of the social/rhetorical aspects of peer

commentary. It examines how the social implications of the evaluation exercise shape the rhetorical advice students offer each other, and vice versa. Editors in the study had to grapple with the fact that their work was going to be read (and judged) by other students as well as their teacher. Would a heightened sense of audience and the resultant enhanced social view serve to liberate or confine their comments? Would their service as editors affect their performance as writers?

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

2.0 OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 explains the philosophy behind peer evaluations, introduces the study participants, describes the procedures followed, and delineates the data collection methods used in this research.

2.1 PARTICIPANTS

The Teacher

To conduct the classroom observations for this research, I needed to identify an enthusiastic teacher who used peer groups. As Anne Ruggles Gere writes, "[a]mong instructors who[se] … writing groups failed I find a high percentage of diffidence or uncertainty … (because) students, like all subjugated groups, read their superiors' feelings exactly" (106). Gere's ironic allusion to the inherent imbalance of power within any classroom raises an issue that was crucial to my own study. Students *are* quick to assess teacher attitudes and respond accordingly. Thus a teacher who had not successfully used peer groups or who had never recognized his/her own students as being particularly skilled in this technique was unlikely to provide a classroom environment in which it would be possible to observe productive peer editors.

Fortunately, the Louisiana State University English Department has several such experienced teachers who expressed interest in my study. From among the interested career instructors, I selected Judith Caprio because she uses peer editing with great panache. The individual/small group/large group peer editing process described in this dissertation is of her design and reflects a system she has developed throughout her 27-year teaching career.

The Researcher

This research, conducted during the Spring 1994 semester, took place in two classes taught by Ms. Caprio. I functioned in two capacities in the classes: to the 1002 students, I was a *teacher/researcher;* to Ms. Caprio, I served as a *participant/observer.* Ms. Caprio' students were notified that they were subjects in a composition research project and consented to participate in this study.

Ms. Caprio welcomed me into her class on a frequent basis. For the study to succeed, we thought that it was important that the students view me as a teacher because this would encourage greater cooperation with my research. Accordingly, I conducted the class on two occasions in Ms. Caprio's absence; in addition to these solo teaching opportunities, I served as a consultant in peer critiquing

in collaboration with Ms. Caprio and taught the initial workshop which modeled meaningful evaluation comments. I led the editing exercise the first time it was conducted in both classes. In addition, I distributed questionnaires each of the three times papers were evaluated; these questionnaires allowed editors to rate the effectiveness of the comments they received in the evaluation exercise. To gauge students' attitudes toward the evaluation process and to note any changes that occurred over the course of the semester, I distributed pre-semester (Appendix B), as well as end-of-semester, questionnaires (Appendix C). On days when peer evaluation occurred, I rotated among the groups, serving as a resource and guiding the process in collaboration with Ms. Caprio.

In short, Ms. Caprio and I modeled the collaborative relationship we wanted the students to develop. My research would have been impossible without the continuous cooperation and support of Ms. Caprio.

The Students

The subjects for this study were the 43 students enrolled in two sections of Ms. Caprio's English 1002 class (a second semester freshman composition course) during the Spring 1994 semester. Data was collected from all 43 students (31 females and 12 males).

Following information gathering from Ms. Caprio's students, I used a table of random numbers to select 14 students (approximately 33% of the combined classes) for study. (Students were assigned the final two digits of their student identification numbers for the random selection process; students with matching digits were assigned the fourth and fifth digits of their I.D. numbers.)

After data from these 14 randomly selected students were compiled and entered, I chose to confine additional research to the nine editors in Ms. Caprio's nine o'clock class. This decision allowed comparison of the maximum number of editorial responses to the same drafts. Following an initial analysis of these nine editors, three editors (James Asher, Andrew Coleman, and Kathryn Eiram) were selected for individual, descriptive case studies.

2.2 ENGLISH 1002 AND PEER EDITING

In English 1002, students are trained to view writing as a persuasive act. Because persuasive writing is social in nature, a writer must consider how an essay will affect an audience. The goal of a persuasive writer is not to take overt control of the writing but to influence and persuade the reader to adopt the writer's viewpoint. Peer evaluation is persuasive writing in that an

evaluator/editor must convince the writer to revise a paper. An effective editor must recognize the authority of the writer at the same time he/she offers feedback targeted to improve the draft; such revision advice should not be confined to the paper's problems (criticism) but should acknowledge the writer's achievements (praise) as well.

In English 1002, as it is currently taught at LSU, most of the classroom strategies focus on imagining/analyzing a fictive audience and anticipating its objections to a particular course of action. This strategy was advocated by Aristotle, who claimed

> …since the object of Rhetoric is judgement … it is not only necessary to consider how to make the speech [text] itself demonstrative and convincing, but also that the speaker [writer] should show himself to be of a certain character and should know *how to put the judge into a certain frame of mind* (emphasis mine) 169.

To achieve this level of effective rhetoric, Aristotle proposed strategies for audience analysis that are still valid today. His pragmatic advice that "proofs and arguments must rest on generally accepted principles (to) converse with the multitude" (11) is as applicable for today's novice rhetor as it was for those enrolled in Aristotle's lyceum.

Unlike training in classical debate that depends on undermining the opposition's logic, one of the assignments in English 1002 stresses Rogerian argument. According to Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike in *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change,* this strategy, developed by psychologist Carl Rogers "seeks to reduce the reader's sense of threat so that he will be able to consider alternatives that … eliminate conflict between writer and reader" (274-275).

Young, Becker, and Pike assert that "Rogerian strategy places a premium on empathy between writer and reader" by following three maxims:

> (1) to convey to the reader that he is understood, (2) to delineate the area within which he believes the reader's position to be valid, and (3) to induce him to believe that he and the writer share similar moral qualities (honesty, integrity, and good will) and aspirations (the desire to discover a mutually acceptable solution) (275).

Accordingly, the strategies used in a successful Rogerian argument are much the same as those which promote productive peer evaluation. Therefore, perceptive students in Ms. Caprio's composition classes were exposed to techniques that could also enhance peer work.

In peer evaluations, both editor and writer must be convinced of the "honesty, integrity, and good will" of the other; in addition, they share a common goal-the

improvement of a draft. Peer evaluation allows a writer to judge how effectively he/she has imagined a fictive reader by providing him/her with a real audience of editors.

Although most student editors are keenly aware of the social aspects of writing, they constitute a radically different audience from the teacher. Implicit in the teacher/student relationship is the pedagogue's version of the Hippocratic oath: "First, do no harm." Most teachers are bound by this unspoken code to consider the feelings of the student when offering criticism; students know this. Some abuse this unspoken tenet by submitting haphazard drafts, secure in the knowledge that the teacher will not disparage it (and their egos) to the extent that another student might. Unfortunately, this pedagogical consideration allows a student to shift responsibility for his/her writing to the reader.

According to the proponents of peer evaluation the most significant advantages of peer readers lies in the fact that they are not bound by the intrinsic rules of pedagogical politeness; therefore, according to Bruffee, they are much more likely to assess a draft candidly or even bluntly. Additionally, because students do not wish to appear ridiculous before their peers, they are more likely to take drafting seriously when they know that other students will read (and comment upon) the work. They

do so because they know that if a peer editor feels that the writer has merely gone through the motions of drafting, he/she may respond as did one of the editors in Ms. Caprio' s class: "This reads like a children's book … I would recommend trashing it and beginning again" (Asher, student comments).

Thus, peer evaluation compels a writer to make a diligent effort to forecast how a reader will react to the work. From my previous research (conducted during the past four years among my own students), I knew that many writers found it easier to anticipate a fictive audience after having seen how their peers responded to writing. Because peer evaluation forces the writer to stretch beyond his/her own opinions and consider the reader's response, a class which exposed students to the strategy of Rogerian argument seemed a congenial environment in which to study peer evaluation.

2.3 CAPRIO PEER GROUP METHOD PROCEDURES/TERMS

Basic Strategy

Ms. Caprio has designed a peer evaluation procedure structured along the lines of a creative writing workshop; her procedure gives students practice in both oral and written commentary. Her system uses a three-part evaluation procedure. Students in the class write an

individual evaluation of a peer's essay; they discuss these individual impressions in a *small group;* finally, the entire class gathers in a *large group* discussion circle to compare evaluation results.

Individual/Small/Large Peer Group Evaluation

Two and one half weeks before the essay's due date, students were given the essay topics, and the structure of the assignment was discussed. At the next class session (which took place two weeks prior to the editing exercise) students were selected for evaluation through random drawing (volunteers were welcomed). The essay's due date, structure, and any specific directions for the assignment were discussed at this time. The *selected* writers were reminded that they would have one additional class period before their final drafts were due to allow them time to revise their draft based on the peer comments. At this time, Ms. Caprio reminded students of the parameters of the assignment; she also reinforced general strategies for peer work. The essays selected in the lottery were distributed to all students in the section one class prior to the in-class evaluation exercise.

Individual evaluation

One class period before the editing exercise, the selected writers brought essay copies to class for the

teacher and for every student in the class. Students received evaluation sheets (Appendix A) for each of the essays that would be reviewed during the next class. During this time, students had the option of working on their own draft of the current essay or beginning to write an evaluation of the *selected* writers; the evaluations had to be completed prior to the next class period. If a student chose to begin writing the evaluation in-class, he/she was *not allowed* to discuss the *selected* essays, either with the teacher, the essay's writer, or the other students. The writing had to stand (or fall) on its own merits, and all editorial comments had to be based solely on the written draft, not verbal explications of the work.

Small group evaluation

On the day of the evaluation, Ms. Caprio placed students in groups of four or five to discuss their individual assessments of the essays. (The writers of the evaluated essays formed a separate group.) Despite the emphasis that many composition researchers have placed on group formation, Ms. Caprio follows a less structured approach to group formation. Her reasons for taking this approach to group selection stem from the fact that her lottery method ensures that the draft's writer is never a member of a small group discussing his/her paper;

therefore, the interaction of personalities within the group is simplified because the writer's reaction is less a factor in the small group discussions. Also, she finds because every editor evaluates the same essays, the writers receive the identical advice they would whatever the composition of the small groups.

Because each student had his/her own copy of the essay, as well as a completed essay evaluation form, the small group discussion averaged about five minutes per paper. During the small group period, each member offered at least one comment on an essay before the group began discussion of the next paper.

Ms. Caprio instructed students that they were under no obligation to arrive at a consensus about any essay. The group discussion merely allowed students the chance to discuss candidly the strengths and weaknesses of each paper within the group before the large-group discussion. During the small group discussion, members often exchanged strategies for offering revision advice to the writer. An important part of this discussion was that it was always confined to members of the immediate group; no cross-exchanges between other groups or the writers took place.

Ms. Caprio and I circulated among the groups to keep discussions focussed, paced, and directed. During this exchange period, either of us was available for students'

questions about individual essays or to give advice for how to phrase criticism diplomatically. Note: although the peer editors commented upon the writing of other students within the class, at this stage of the process they were not doing so in the presence of the writer; the peer editing groups (with the exception of the selected writers group) did not include the writer of the paper under discussion.

Large group discussion

After the small group discussions, the entire class formed a single discussion circle to compare their findings and offer verbal suggestions to the writers. Ms. Caprio was careful to remind editors of the need to phrase remarks tactfully. She also demanded that all remarks be directed to the writer, rather than to her; this acknowledged the fact that while others in the class (including Ms. Caprio) heard the comments, the essay's writer was supposed to be the editor's audience.

Ms. Caprio guided the order in which the essays were discussed to ensure that the essays she deemed strongest were discussed last/next to last. She also took care that the weakest essay was never the first discussed by the large group; this allowed the group an adjustment period before attempting the most challenging essay. Ms. Caprio

guided the discussion circle, participating in it without monopolizing it. She also functioned as the facilitator, deciding when the discussion time for each paper had elapsed.

At the conclusion of class, *selected* writers collected their individually-marked essays from each peer editor, as well as all signed comment sheets. At this point, the teacher also offered her own marked essay and evaluation form. *Selected* writers were encouraged to schedule a conference with the teacher to discuss any comments they found confusing. To encourage revision based on the peer evaluations, the selected essays were due one week after the editing exercise. The editors' final drafts were due at the beginning of the next class.

Because of the unique structure of her evaluation exercise, students in Ms. Caprio's class heard 20 other students respond to the same essay. Because they all commented upon the same essays, it was easy for individual editors to see how their advice matched (or failed to match) that of their peers.

Because of the previously-discussed combination of individual, small, and large group evaluation, I will specifically differentiate between activities which took place in *small groups* (groups of four to five peer

editors) in which comparisons/discussions of each editor's *individual* comment sheets took place and the *large group* (formed when the small groups formed a single discussion circle).

2.4 DATA COLLECTION

Information about the editorial comments of the student editors was gathered through a variety of techniques. These included the personal observations of Ms. Caprio and myself; the analysis and examination of student essays and peer editing sheets; information gathered from student questionnaires; and post-semester interviews with three peer editors.

To gather information about prior peer evaluation experience, I distributed a pre-semester questionnaire to students in these classes (Appendix B). A modified version of this questionnaire was also distributed at the end of the semester to gauge what (if any) changes in attitude about peer evaluation had occurred (Appendix C). To check drafts for peer comments, judge the validity of such comments, and observe whether the writer was able to use the peer feedback to improve his/her final draft, I kept files on all students in both sections of the observed classes. To show their consent to include their work in

this research, all students signed a consent form (Appendix D).

Because student consensus of my informal research was that longer comments usually signaled thoughtful, trustworthy commentary, I counted the length of each editors' comments. After entering a complete set of comments for several editors, it became apparent that individual editors wrote comments of approximately the same length for all selected essays of the same assignment. Therefore, I reviewed the files of the nine editors from Ms. Caprio's 9 o'clock class to determine which essays had been evaluated by the maximum number of editors. The essays for which most of the nine randomly-selected editors had commented were the Cash, Hammond, Lovett, Asher, Tilley, and Jones essays. Accordingly, the comments about those essays (whenever possible) were studied in order to compare/contrast what different editors had to say about the same work.

If the editor had *not* responded to one of these six essays, another essay from the same essay assignment that the editor had evaluated was substituted. When each editor's six sets of comments were entered and counted, an individual comment length was calculated for all nine editors from the nine o'clock class. To determine an

average length of the editorial comments, I entered the comments into my computer and conducted a word count. Because editors wrote comments of a (personal) standard length when commenting on essays written for a particular assignment, comment sheets for two essays in each assignment were selected (for a total of six essays).

This count provided only the most basic information about the comments; to understand them more fully, I also coded the evaluations for critical content using the Flower et al. three-part self-revision strategy. Although this strategy has obvious implications for evaluating the utility of peer commentary, some modifications were necessary to adapt the concept to student evaluators.

According to Flower and her associates, when a writer reads his/her own work in order to revise it, the first step in the process is *detecting* problems in the text. (Note: for my analysis, I modified this first category to include basic identification of the essay's key features.) Ms. Caprio provided her students with an evaluation form to guide their reading of the essays; this form asked editors to look for basic features of the essay (thesis, audience, opposition/rebuttal, etc.). If an editor identified one of these main features, the response was coded as revision level 1 (*detecting*). If an editor

diagnosed a problem ("Introduction paragraph needs to be clearer), the comment was coded as revision level 2 (*building* a diagnostic representation of the problem). Comments that offered the writer advice on how to fix a problem ("Maybe separate into general sentences instead of throwing all the facts into one sentence") were coded as revision level 3 (*selecting* an appropriate revision strategy).

Although Flower et al. establish that productive revision is a three part process, they examine writers' revision of their own papers, and therefore have no provision for complimentary comments. I devised a similar system to code comments in praise of an essay. If an editor offered ambiguous praise that could be interchanged between essays without modification ("good!" "yes," "no changes") it was coded *praise level 1*. Comments that were adjunct to an aspect of the essay ("introduction was good," "great background," "you had a lot of details to back up your ideas") were coded *praise level 2* ; comments that referenced a specific aspect of an essay ("… makes a good point when she asks the question 'Is worrying about grades really worth it?'") were coded *praise level 3*.

Classification of both the revision advice and the praise an editor offered made it possible to identify the type of comments typical of each editor.

Finally, three editors were selected based on my classroom observations and an initial analysis of the editorial comments. Each of the three was asked to evaluate a common essay. This allowed comparison of these three editors' comments. It also enabled me to contrast how differently editors conveyed the same information, based on their perceptions of the most significant features of the task. To gain additional insight in the evaluation process of each of the case study editors, I asked these three students to describe their personal editing process.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

3.0 OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

The results show that students' concerns about social relationships controlled the evaluation procedure. Not only did social factors influence the length and content of the editors' comments, but these factors also affected how writers received the comments.

This chapter analyzes the comments that the nine editors in the study made; this appraisal addresses the issue of comment length as well as content. I review the commentary addressed to two essays to illustrate the Revision Level (RL) and Praise Level (PL) coding system. After I discuss the patterns that emerged in the larger group of nine editors, the comments of three of these editors are presented for intensive study. All three evaluated a common essay and participated in an individual post-semester interview. This chapter also provides Ms. Caprio's perceptions of each of the three case editors and their writing progress during the semester.

3.1 COMMENT ANALYSIS

Length

The first commentary variable examined was comment length. I selected this variable because it was one aspect of peer evaluation that the students always either

criticized or praised when evaluating the feedback they received. For instance, one student noted, "People never went into detail on what was wrong." Another writer in the study, Ms. Hammond, went so far as to link reading/understanding with comment length:

> From some students that actually took the time to read my paper, I received a few good comments. I used them to revise my paper. When students just wrote 'good,' 'needs opposition,' 'okay, ' or 'I liked it,' it didn't help me with my revisions. It didn't bother me to let others edit my work as long as they really offered suggestions. If they just wrote good or okay about everything it made me mad.

While this remark does not specifically equate quality and comment length, it implies a relationship between the two. More relevant to this study, it demonstrates an inchoate awareness of the need for some sort of systematicapproach when making editorial comments.

In contrast to what Daiker reports (that students receive any praise with "thanksgiving,") Ms. Hammond also expressed dissatisfaction with equivocal praise that could be interchanged from essay to essay ("good," "everything looks fine"). To address the issue of praise in peer commentary, I devised a three part system (ambiguous [PL 1]; adjunct [PL 2]; specific [PL 3]) to classify complimentary remarks.

The 9 o'clock class wrote an average of 84.74 words (in response to the evaluation prompts) for each of the six

common essays. Although the average response to the prompt was approximately 85 words, personal comment lengths ranged from a high of 150 words to a low of only 68 words for individual editors. In descending order, the average number of words each editor used to respond to the teacher prompt was: Ms. Kensey-150; Ms. Eiram-135; Ms. Hammond-128; Mr. Asher-98; Mr. Grant-89.5; Ms. Jones-82; Ms. Murphy-78.6; Mr. Coleman-78; and Mr. Matthew-68.

A more complete picture of the editors emerged when the remarks were coded for revision and praise content (Figure 1). For instance, the most prolific editor, Ms. Kensey, wrote 97 comments to the six essays analyzed for this study. Using my modified revision process, 80% of her comments offered an analysis of the essay and proffered revision advice, while 20% offered praise.

To illustrate, when evaluating the Cash essay, Ms. Kensey provided 159 words (19 comments). Five of the comments identified key features of the essay ("she summarized the essay") and were coded RL 1, while four were RL 2 comments that diagnosed a problem in the paper ("She needs to make sure about the assignment"). All but one of the eight comments offered in praise of the essay mentioned a particular aspect of the essay ("The body is clear and informative") and were coded PL 2.

FIGURE 1—REVISION/PRAISE LEVELS

Editor	Revision level 1	Revision level 2	Revision level 3	Praise level 1	Praise level 2	Praise level 3	Revision Total	Praise Total
Eiram	20 comments	10 comments	18 comments	0 comments	8 comments	6 comments	48 comments	14 comments
Hammond	16 comments	20 comments	23 comments	0 comments	3 comments	2 comments	59 comments	5 comments
Asher	11 comments	26 comments	17 comments	5 comments	4 comments	1 comments	54 comments	10 comments
Grant	29 comments	12 comments	5 comments	2 comments	2 comments	0 comments	46 comments	4 comments
Jones	27 comments	21 comments	10 comments	6 comments	8 comments	1 comments	58 comments	15 comments
Murphy	22 comments	34 comments	25 comments	11 comments	11 comments	1 comments	81 comments	23 comments
Coleman	34 comments	23 comments	10 comments	7 comments	1 comment	0 comments	67 comments	8 comments
Matthew	17 comments	13 comments	4 comments	14 comments	3 comments	2 comments	34 comments	19 comments
Kensey	41 comments	18 comments	19 comments	4 comments	15 comments	0 comments	78 comments	19 comments
Total Comments	217 comments	177 comments	131 comments	49 comments	55 comments	13 comments	525 comments	117 comments

Revision Level 1-identifies essay's basic features
Revision Level 2-diagnoses an essay's problems
Revision Level 3-offers specific revision advise

Praise Level 1-ambiguous praise
Praise Level 1-targets any aspect of the essay
Praise Level 1-praises a specific element

The editor with the next highest total was Ms. Eiram who wrote an average of 135 words per essay; 77% of her comments were directed toward revision, while 23% offered praise. Over half (58%) of her revision comments were offered at RL 2 ("… you need more opposition and refutation") or RL 3 ("You could mention … that you have to go through driver's ed. and take a written test … before you can get a license, and guns are as deadly as a vehicle"). The praise she offered was similarly specific ("… your thesis statement does a good job of letting your reader know right away what your viewpoint is" [PL 2]); all 14 comments offered as praise were coded at either PL 2 (8 comments) or PL 3 (6 comments).

The editor using the third most words in her comments was Ms. Hammond, who averaged 128 words; she wrote a total (revision and praise) of 64 comments. Most of her comments (92%) offered revision advice. Her pre-semester questionnaire noted that too often "everyone mostly writes the same general comments on all the papers;" fittingly, only 16 of her own 58 revision comments were coded at RL 1 ("the writer of the draft provides an overview of the essay's main points,"). The majority (43) of her revision remarks were at RL 2 or 3; for example, the following is one of her typical RL 2 responses, "The organization is good but the paper doesn't seem to have an ending." She

offered 23 comments to the writers in the study that were coded at RL 3; "I thought that maybe paragraph 3 would be a good way to start your paper and then add to your first paragraph" was a typical RL 3 comment for this editor.

She wrote only five comments that praised the essays; however, all offered specific comments. Ms. Hammond offered three PL 2 comments and two coded at PL 3.

Mr. Asher was the editor writing the fourth most lengthy comments in response to the teacher prompts; he wrote 64 comments, 54 of which (84% of the total comments) were revision oriented, while ten (16%) offered praise. Only 11 of Mr. Asher's comments were RL 1 comments; 26 (48%) of his revision comments were at RL 2. This editor offered 17 RL 3 comments, although only one PL 3 comment. Five of his comments were Pl 1 remarks, while four were PL 2. Sixteen percent of his commentary offered praise. (Mr. Asher's comments will be discussed at length in section 3.5.)

Although Mr. Grant wrote an average of 89.5 words per essay, making him the fifth-most prolific editor, he wrote the fewest number of comments—50. Of these, only four (8% of his total comments) offered praise; 92% of the remarks were oriented toward revision. Twenty nine (63%) of his total comments were coded RL 1. Only five of his comments reached RL 3, and none of his praise reached level 3.

Typical was his response to the Cash essay, quoted here in its entirety

> The writer does provide a summary of the essay [RL 1]. She agrees with the author [RL 2]. Grading system puts too much pressure on the students [RL 1]. She tells her personal experiences to back up her opinions [RL 1]. Everything is good [PL 1]. None [PL 1].

Ms. Jones was the editor offering the next most lengthy comments; she wrote 73 comments. Of these, 58 were revision suggestions, while 15 offered praise for the essays. Of her 58 revision comments, 27 were at RL 1 and 21 were RL 2; typical of her RL 2 comments was this remark offered in response to the Tilley essay, "Put more detail in the conclusion." She offered 10 comments at RL 3; typical of her RL 3 remarks is her response to the Kinsey essay calling for an end to smoking in the LSU residential halls is representative " You state how it was the smoker's right, but they should be more considerate (last paragraph)". Ms. Jones's PL comments were almost evenly divided between PL 1 and 2; her comments in praise of the Grant essay were typical, "Introduction was good—great background!"

Ms. Murphy's ranking as one of the three least lengthy editors demonstrates the weakness inherent in placing too much emphasis on comment length alone as an indicator of an editor's involvement in the evaluation process. (In this discussion of her comments, I have

included her textual commentary to give a more accurate picture of her editorial style.)

Although while responding to the evaluation prompt, her comment length was only 78.6 words, she wrote a total of 104 comments, 81 RL (78%) and 23 PL (22%) if her textual comments are included. Of her revision comments, 22 were RL 1; 34 were PL 2; and 25 were RL 3. Her comments were interesting because they often blended revision and praise; an example of this style occurs in one of her responses to the Cash essay, "I think you did a great job answering the arguments that you were given [PL 2], but I felt that you agreed more than disagreed" [RL 2].

Fewer than a third (32%) of Ms. Murphy's total (revision and praise) comments were coded at the first level of their respective categories: 22 RL comments; 11 PL comments. An example of her preferred style occurs in one of her responses to the Asher essay, "Second paragraph the 2nd & 3rd sentences were a little strange [RL 2] so I tried to show what I thought sounded better [RL 3]."

Although Mr. Coleman's comment length was almost identical to Ms. Murphy's (78 to her 78.6 words) he wrote only 74 comments; of these comments, 67 (91% of the total) were directed toward revision, while only seven (9% of the total) offered praise. Mr. Coleman's comments will be discussed at length in Section 3.5; however, it should be

noted that he wrote only 10 of his 74 revision comments at RL 3, and that all but one of his seven praise comments were PL 1.

Mr. Matthew was the editor who used the fewest number of words to evaluate the essays. He offered a total of 52 comments, 34 offering revision advice and 18 in praise of the essays. Half (17) of Mr. Matthew's 34 revision comments were offered at RL 1 and 38% (13) were coded RL 2; typical of his RL 2 remarks was this offered in response to the Hammond essay on gun control, "The thesis was very good [PL 2], but the writer seemed to stray from her main idea [RL 2]." He offered only two comments at RL 3. This editor offered only 19 comments that praised an essay; of his praise, 74% (14 of 19 comments) were PL 1. His most common praise remark was the PL 1 standby, "good."

Difficulties in Content Analysis

It was difficult to analyze the comments because most editors neglected to identify the copies of the drafts they evaluated. Because of this omission, it was not possible to match copies of text to evaluation sheets for every editor.

Several things became apparent when comment content (as well as length) was studied. Some students were unable (or unwilling) to get beyond RL 1; they remained locked at the detection level. For instance, one editor, Mr.

Matthew, admitted that he only "commented on things I do well in my writing, as I thought I wasn't qualified to comment on things I don't do well." Representative comments from this editor remained at RL 2 and rarely offered specific advice for revision: "subject/verb agreement; pronoun reference."

Comment content was affected also by the method editors employed to answer Ms. Caprio's evaluation prompt. Some editors answered the prompts in complete sentences. For instance one editor, Mr. Grant, typically answered the question on Ms. Caprio's evaluation guide, not by restating or summarizing the selected essay's premise, but by copying the thesis word for word from the writer's paper. Although this practice did provide a writer with knowledge about whether he/she had an identifiable thesis, 61% of Mr. Grant's remarks remained at RL 1.

When an essay demonstrated substantial problems, editors were placed in a difficult position; did they ignore the paper's problems and allow the writer to risk a bad grade, or did they offer revision advice and risk offending the writer? An editor's concern for social consequences of evaluation, as well as his/her rhetorical ability appeared to control the level to which he/she offered revision advice or praise. Two drafts in particular proved problematic for Ms. Caprio's class. Neither paper

offered adequate counter-argument or refutation to their respective proposals, and the social context of one draft was encumbered by its temperamental writer.

3.2 JONES ESSAY COMMENTS

The draft of this essay (Figure 2) was seriously flawed. The writer had written a diatribe against smoking in residence halls, apparently without giving much thought to how this might offend smokers in her audience. The comments universally alluded to this failure, although the method by which it was imparted varied greatly. For instance, Ms. Murphy wrote, "I really couldn't tell who you were writing this to" [RL 1]. Another editor (Ms. Kinsey) gave a more explicit warning, "It seems like you were rushed when you wrote it [RL 2]. Try to be sensitive to smokers' feelings. Don't make them offen[ded]. Use Rogerian" [RL 3].

Thus comment content rather than length was the surer indicator of editorial skill. For instance, Mr. Grant typically responded to the thesis prompt by summarizing the thesis rather than underlining it on the text: "People in the residence halls should not smoke" [RL 1]. Ms. Murphy quoted the entire thesis, "People in residence halls should not smoke. It not only harms the smoker's health, but it

People in the residential halls should not smoke. It not only harms the smoker's health, but it also affects the people around the smoker.

Smokers feel they have the right to smoke. Many do not know about the harming effects of smoking, or they do not want to believe them. Smokers think the effects will not harm their health because it only affects other smokers.

I agree with smoking being the smokers right, but the smokers need to be more considerate to the needs of others. More smokers should be as understanding as David Sedaris. Sitting on a park bench, David delightfully lit a cigarette. A lady sitting across from him politely asked to put it out. David realized her needs and quietly obeyed (Sedaris 22).

Smoke-Free Environment Act of 1993 wants to ban smoking in all public buildings such as dorms on campus. Evidence has shown that inhaling someone else's cigarette smoke can lead to deaths from heart disease and other forms of cancer. The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) stated that 70% of the heart disease and lung cancer was due to secondhand smoke in a public place ("Snuffling Out Secondhand Smoke" 1:14).

David Sedaris, along with many other smokers, believes the EPA reports "accuse smokers of criminal recklessness, as if these were people who kept loaded pistols lying on the coffee table, crowded alongside straight razors and mugs benzene" Sedaris 24). I agree that banning smoking in public places will inconvenience the smokers, but it will be easier for those who avoid secondhand smoke.

Smoking in the dorm is very annoying for those who live there and do not smoke. The halls are smoky; the ashes are all over everything; the individual rooms and clothes begin to smell. I do not understand why someone can not go outside to smoke. Smokers are willing to harm and annoy others in order to get the thrill of smoking.

FIGURE 2—THE JONES ESSAY

also affects the people around the smoker" [RL 1]. As did her colleague, Ms. Kinsey summarized the paper's overarching concerns: "People in residential halls should not smoke because it is harmful to everybody's health." However, Ms. Kinsey then took the evaluation process to RL 3 and offered strategies to reorganize the paper and make it more complex: "Maybe you could explain or mention (to expand the 1st paragraph) the hazards of secondhand smoke. Maybe tell how it affects people around the smoker."

Another editor, Ms. Murphy, made textual comments on this essay which gave an emphatic RL 3 comment indicating one point of possible confusion: "Set this up better, I had no idea who [National Public Radio commentator] David Sedaris is." She then went on to offer concrete suggestions for the external reorganization of the essay:

> The 5th paragraph doesn't make sense [RL 1]. I think paragraph #4 is out of place [RL 2]. Paragraph #6 ties in to #4 better [RL 3]. You may be able to use the fact that Taco Bell is now a smoke free business nationwide, and so is another one but I can't think of it now [RL 3].

3.3 ASHER ESSAY COMMENTS

James Asher's essay arguing for the legalization of marijuana (Figure 3) also proved to be troublesome for the editors. Mr. Asher had written a draft of an essay which presented very little opposition to his proposal to legalize the selling of marijuana. The process of

The legalization of marijuana is an idea that should become a law, because its benefits far outweigh its consequences. If you look at the effects of legalizing marijuana form a logical standpoint instead of a moral one then it becomes clear that legalizing marijuana would be more beneficial than keeping it illegal.

The largest benefit of legalizing marijuana is that it would take the market out of the hands of street thugs and allow the government to control its quality and distribution. Younger kids tend to turn to pot because it is more accessible than alcohol at a young age. When someone sells you drugs, they do not usually ask to see your I.D. The government could also regulate the type and potency of the marijuana sold which would reduce any health risk it possesses. Most marijuana smokers will smoke pot whether it is legal or not, giving control of it over to the government would help reduce its negative effects on society.

Drug-related crimes would reduce once marijuana is made available in legalized form. Gangs control the market right now and kill each other because some gang member sold marijuana in an area that another gang typically sells it. The gangs settle their territorial differences through violence which not only kills gang members but also the innocent people who accidentally step onto the path of a stray bullet. During prohibition the increase in violence was dramatic, because they took the alcohol market out of the hands of the store owners and put it into the hands of the mafia. Prohibition did not keep people from drinking, it only increased the price of alcohol and made people kill each other for it. Once they legalized alcohol again, the mafia had no control of the market and the violence decreased. Legalizing marijuana would have the same effect in decreasing violence in the gangs that control it.

Some of the other benefits of giving the control of pot over to the government would be the extra money that would be saved and collected from its legalization. The government wastes billions of dollars every year in order to control the

FIGURE 3—THE ASHER ESSAY

amount of marijuana entering the country and to track down and arrest those who already have it in the United States. If pot were legalized then those procedures would not be required and that would save taxpayers a lot of money. another way that legalization would benefit taxpayers would be if the government would tax marijuana heavily, much like they do cigarettes, then it would become a valuable income source for our state and federal budgets. In general, legalizing pot would take something that costs us money and turn it into something that would be profitable.

Before marijuana was illegal, it was a very useful agriculture product. Since marijuana is a weed it grows very easily and requires very little specialized care, which makes it an inexpensive agriculture product for farmers. The hemp that marijuana grows from can be used to make paper and rope. This would reduce the need to cut it down which would be beneficial to the environment. The marijuana plant can also be used to produce a durable fabric which could be used to make inexpensive clothing. But of course these benefits can not be reaped while the plant is illegal.

If you compare marijuana to alcohol it is difficult to understand why one is legal and the other illegal. While alcohol has been proven to be addictive in certain people, most medical experts agree that marijuana is not addictive. Alcohol also does far more damage to the brain than marijuana does. People who drive while drunk are more likely to get into an auto accident than people who drive stoned. The overall effect of alcohol on people is worse than the effect of marijuana, yet alcohol remains legal while marijuana is illegal.

After looking at the benefits of legalizing marijuana it seems evident that it should be legalized. It would help us economically while lowering the marijuana related violent crimes. It would allow control of a market which previously ran rampant. It is an idea that should be seriously considered and tested instead of ignored because it is morally wrong.

evaluating his essay presented as many social difficulties as its lopsided composition offered rhetorical problems because when Mr. Asher's draft was reviewed near midterm, the editors had a clearer sense of how their advice was likely to be received by individual writers. In this case, they were afraid of offending Mr. Asher. Because he was never reticent about (vehemently) stating his opinion in class, the editors were all clearly uneasy with the prospect of offending him. I knew the difficulties editors faced with this essay; during the small group discussions, several students confided to me that they were afraid to tell Mr. Asher what they thought about the essay for fear of what he might do to their own essay in a subsequent evaluation. At the same time, they knew that the draft needed revision to include opposition/refutation to his marijuana legalization proposal.

The method by which they handled this situation was characteristic for the editors. Ms. Kinsey, noted that the paper lacked opposition; however, she cast her advice in Rogerian terms. She began her comments with praise, first stating her points of agreement with the essay before noting her points of disagreement with its logic.

> Arguments for legalization were very strong [PL 2]. Clear strong points to legalize in each paragraph [PL 2]. Explained points well [PL 1]. There wasn't any opposition in this paper [RL 1]. Everything supported

> thesis to legalize, but nothing supported opposition [RL 2].

Yet another editor, Ms. Murphy, made textual comments of 112 words for this draft in addition to the 149 words she wrote on the evaluation sheet. (As previously noted, because not all editors attached their copies of the draft to their evaluation sheets, I did not have accurate data about the textual comments for most editors; accordingly, textual commentary was not included in the average of comment length, although I have included textual comments in content discussions when they could be identified.) While she also was careful to cast her advice in Rogerian terms, she was more forceful than either of the previously-cited editors. Ms. Murphy was unafraid to admit that she was unconvinced with Mr. Asher's proposal as offered, and she made specific suggestions for the draft's revision.

> Paper as a whole was well planned and easy to read [PL 2]. Very strong points that are backed up well [PL 2]. You might consider using some documentation [RL 3]. This will build up your credibility [RL 2]. Can you back this up with an article because it is hard for me to ~~believe~~ accept [RL 3].

She goes on to offer suggestions for revision:

> 1. Did you have any articles that will back you up? [RL 2]
>
> 2. You have good strong points for legalizing marijuana [PL 3]. Maybe you should add in different drugs and tell why marijuana should be legalized and they shouldn't [RL 3].
> 3. You didn't state any opposition [RL 2]. Tell what others might say about legalizing marijuana [RL 3].

3.4 PEER EDITORS—THREE CASE STUDIES

After comment counts and initial analysis of the selected editors from Ms. Caprio's 9 o'clock class, I read the material collected on all nine and chose three for additional study. Mr. Asher, Mr. Coleman, and Ms. Eiram were selected based on the content and length of their comments and their responses to the pre/post semester questionnaires, as well as my classroom observations. I wanted additional information about how these individuals approached editing, particularly with respect to the social ramifications of the process.

These editors were contacted in the Fall 1994 semester and asked if they were willing to participate in a brief interview. In this session, they each received the same (previously-unseen) essay, and were asked to read, mark and comment upon it. Afterwards, I asked them to describe their evaluation process, as well as their personal evaluation philosophy.

Case Study No. 1—James Asher

Mr. Asher was an eighteen-year-old, second semester freshman while enrolled in English 1002. His major was Mechanical Engineering, a field in which he felt "English … my weakest subject … is not considered crucial." At the beginning of the semester, he felt that the comments which

would be most useful for revision were "the ones that point out redundant information or confusing sentences. Mechanical errors and spelling can also be useful but most computers do that for you."

Although Mr. Asher listed reading as a favorite pastime and professed an affinity for the author Clive Barker and science fiction/fantasy, he did not consider himself to be a good writer. He was also a self-confessed procrastinator; he claimed if he had a writing project due in two weeks he would "put it off for about a week and six days, then start,"

He conceded he had "let the rest (of his group) do the work" on a collaborative writing project in his English 1001 class. He did not find this collaborative experience useful because "the end result was dribble [because] it's too hard to combine different styles." Mr. Asher did not think that he would be able to offer help with the "spelling or mechanical errors" of an essay, although he felt confident of his ability to "offer ideas on making a sentence more clear or recognizing useless information."

By the end of the semester (and 1002) Mr. Asher found that while he did "like commenting on other's work … it is difficult to do so without being insulting. Some papers I read were so bad that I wanted to tell them to start over." Despite the fact that he was (at times) appalled with the

quality of the writing he was asked to review, he was sure that he had "always managed to not be insulting."

In addition to the benefit he felt he had provided, Mr. Asher's own opinion about the personal benefits of group work had changed. By the end of the semester he felt that writing the evaluations "also helped me. I learned a lot from proofing other papers. I saw what they did effectively and not effectively and used that information on my own papers."

Fortunately Mr. Asher felt his own writing benefitted as a result of his writing evaluations, in view of the fact that he felt most of the comments he received on his own work "were worthless." He complained that "people never went into detail on what was wrong. They just said that something was wrong. It's difficult to correct a problem if you don't know what it is."

This concisely explains his philosophy of peer evaluations: an evaluator must serve as a writing diagnostician/surgeon. As an editor, Mr. Asher saw his task as being to seek out, find, and excise diseased rhetoric, thereby saving the writing of the author (if not his/her feelings). He remained true to his personal credo throughout the semester.

Asher edits Tilley

Although he felt he "always managed to not be insulting," Mr. Asher was never reticent in expressing his opinion of a paper. Of the Tilley essay (Figure 4) which analyzed Jacob Neusner's essay *The Speech the Graduates Didn't Hear,* he wrote

> Try to add some bulk to this paper [RL 2]. It seems to me that this paper is a good example of a paper that is done with a minimum of effort to receive a passing grade [RL 2]. You do not address the arguments of the original essay [RL 2]. Reread this out loud because there are some places where the paper sounds messy [RL 2]. Go more in depth on how the author generalizes students and teachers [RL 3].

The comment about papers written "to receive a passing grade" is an allusion to the Neusner essay, and reveals the complexity of Mr. Asher's commentary. This particular observation not only critiqued the Tilley essay, but attempted to redirect Ms. Tilley's reading of the Neusner essay. Although at face value, the "passing grade" reference was a bit harsh, the remainder of his comment was focused, specific and direct, in short, precisely what we ask of our students. Mr. Asher's comments pointed out that she had not written the assigned essay, which was supposed to *analyze* the language of the Neusner essay, not (re)argue the ideas it expressed. It was immediately apparent that these were neither the remarks of an easily-dismissed crank nor those of an evaluation dilettante, but rather the work

In "The Speech The Graduates Didn't Hear," Jacob Neusner addresses the graduating class at Brown University. In it Neusner claims that for over four years that they have spent in college, they have been living in a world full of fantasies and lies that do not prepare them for the "real" world. Instead, he claims, professors have not wanted to feel bothered by them and consequently let their errors slide by. However, throughout the speech, Neusner leads to over generalize by putting teachers and students into one category.

I agree with Neusner to the fact that teachers ans students fall into this category to a certain extent. Throughout my educational experience, I have seen many teachers who were easily persuaded when it came to grades and errors made by the students. There has also been students who have turned in effortless and ill-labored papers just to get what they thought would be a passing grade.

On the other hand, I have to disagree with Neusner saying that there are more than just that one category. I have also seen throughout my educational experience that there are these teachers who really do care about their students. They try and teach their students to work to the best of their ability ans bring out the best in them. There are also those students what want to learn. Those are the students that sit in the front of the class and answer the teachers questions and ask questions of their own.

However, in order to increase teacher enthusiasm, ans student motivation, there must be some form of action taken. I feel that by having more one on one conferences between the student and the teacher, would set certain standards that the students would have to follow. This would also prepare students for the world in which they will soon be entering.

Maybe after such a action as this once takes place there will be more people taking pride in college graduation. Students should then be able to go teach the next generation what they have learn that made them ready for the future.

FIGURE 4—THE TILLEY ESSAY

of an editor who took the task (albeit not the writer's feelings) to heart.

Asher edits Jones

Sometimes too much to heart; for instance, one memorable remark occurred when he evaluated the Jones essay. In response to this poorly-organized effort, Mr. Asher had yielded to his instinct and recommended "trashing this and beginning again." Because this remark was blunt even by Mr. Asher's standards, I questioned him about it in our post-semester interview.

Re-reading his comment after a semester, Mr. Asher admitted that he "probably didn't help her much." After probing on my part, he explained that he had been angry when he evaluated the essay because he felt that he had spent more time writing his evaluation than she had in writing the draft. Ms. Jones, he felt, had violated (what was to him) an implicit writer/reader covenant. She had wasted his time by technically fulfilling the requirements of her task (to present a draft at the appointed time) without honoring the spirit of the assignment (to present a sincere effort). Because he felt that she had violated her part of the contract, Mr. Asher felt no obligation to rewrite the draft for her or to provide specific

suggestions for improvement. He did not feel that she had given him enough material to work with.

In contrast to the abrupt way in which he dismissed Ms. Jones (70 words on the evaluation sheet; nothing written on the text), Mr. Asher would provide specific suggestions if he felt that the writer had tried to produce a draft.

Asher edits Dennis

An example of his willingness to work with a writer that he felt had made a sincere effort occurs in Mr. Asher's evaluation of the Dennis essay (Figure 5). This essay proposed legislation to limit cigarette sales to minors. Although this draft also presented substantial gaps in logic, Mr. Asher felt the writer had made a sincere effort to complete the assignment; therefore, he provided 60 words on the comment sheet, supplemented with 68 words of textual notes. As usual, his comments pulled no punches:

> I didn't find your arguments very convincing [RL 2]. It's not that your logical skills are bad, but this idea is too expensive for the good it would do [RL 3]. Refutation-You address the money issue well with the tax but Congress can't force a company to pay for its laws [RL 3].

An interesting aspect of Mr. Asher's editorial style was his penchant for textual commentary. He often wrote almost

Congress should pass a law requiring identification cards to be shown in order to purchase cigarettes. This is a way to try and prevent teenage smoking.

In the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, an article reports that an EPA report classifies cigarette smoke a cancer agent more dangerous than arsenic or radon. The report also says secondhand smoke causes 3,000 lung cancer deaths in adults and as many as 300,000 cases of bronchitis in children.

Another Advocate article reports teen-agers pour about $240 million a year into state and federal taxes. Most from stores illegally selling to minors. In another report teens bought 255 million packs of cigarettes in 1991. Teen-ages 12-18 are reported to smoke up to 12 cigarettes a day, most of them bought illegally.

Most states have the legal age set at 18, but the ID card requirement would make 18 legal in every state. Some people might say teens can produce fake ID, but by placing a bar code on the back of ID's would prevent a surplus of fake ID's. The bar code would also aid in preventing use of cigarette machine. Congress should also raise the 24 cent federal tax on cigarettes even more than the 75 cent the President has proposed. The tax would then pay for overhauls of all cigarette machines. For anything taxes don't pay for in the overhaul Congress would require cigarette companies to pay for.

Some people ask why the increase in teen age smoking? Some experts say cigarette ads entice underage smoking. In an Advocate article Karen Daragen, spokeswoman for Phillip Morris USA, says:

"In the late 1960's it certainly was a time of great social revolution. Young people were experimenting with all sorts of things in the 60's. It could be that young females began acting like their male counterparts during this time."

In a report by the American Lung Association, the coalition will ask federal regulators to restrict the use of images in tobacco advertisements aimed at young people, especially young women. Some images include sexual attraction, sophistication, social prominence and success, which are believed to entice young people to smoke.

FIGURE 5—THE DENNIS ESSAY

as many words on the draft of the essay itself as he did on the evaluation sheet. His textual comments provided particularly specific advice to the writer.

For the Dennis essay, for instance, the textual comments provided the (RL 2) observation that "This would not prevent teenage smoking but it would reduce teenage smoking," in response to Dennis's thesis that Congress could prevent teenaged smoking if only majors could purchase cigarettes. This textual comment pointed to what Mr. Asher perceived to be one of the main flaws of the draft.

Another textual comment on the Dennis essay was prompted by Dennis's assertion in paragraph 2 that teens contribute approximately $240 million each year in state and federal taxes. Mr. Asher pointed out that "You might not want to mention this because stopping teenage smoking would take 240 million dollars out of our economy" (RL 3).

His textual comments frequently gave RL 3 advice for the reorganization of the paper. In paragraph 3, for instance, the textual comment beside sentence 2 directs Dennis to "add this to your thesis." In paragraph 4, the textual commentary dismisses the quotation of (Philip Morris representative) Karen Daragan as irrelevant, before pointing out the flawed logic of the final paragraph. In response to the conclusion's assertion that the tobacco

industry encourages teens to smoke by advertising which links smoking with sex, sophistication, and social success, Mr. Asher offers the trenchant (RL 3) observation that this was in conflict with Dennis's earlier assertion that "young people smoked to be rebellious." His concluding textual (RL 3) comments to Dennis observe that "Most stores already card people for cigarettes. I don't think your idea would be very effective."

The Surgical Editor

The comments quoted above are representative of Mr. Asher's editorial style. They are interesting because they provide precisely what Mr. Asher considered to be the most important aspects of the evaluation process: specific advice for improvement of the draft that focused on internal and external organization rather than grammar and mechanical errors.

Mr. Asher faithfully commented on all the drafts written throughout the semester; he averaged 98 words per essay, a figure which does not include his textual comments. Although these comments provided accurate, specific advice for revision, his peers did not respond very favorably to his efforts. Ms. Jones later told me that Mr. Asher was the editor she had in mind when she commented

> Everyone treated me with respect except for one person. He was rude. It seemed like he thought his

> paper was always perfect, & no one else's was … He … offended me. He could have spoken to me nicely. he could have even said the same thing but spoke in a nicer tone.

Her assessment of Mr. Asher's editorial style included both his oral and his written comments of her essay. During the large group discussion with the writers, Mr. Asher appeared to have been reacting to Ms. Jones's earlier criticism of his own essay; while his remarks were accurate, she felt that the tone in which he conveyed his comments transformed them from observation to criticism.

Despite the fact that his peers did not always appreciate his comments, Mr. Asher's performance on his final essay exam indicate that his own assessment of the semester was accurate. In his end-of-semester questionnaire, Mr. Asher wrote that he believed that serving as an editor had benefitted his own writing. He received the grade of A- on the final. In contrast to his poorly-organized diagnostic essay, the final Mr. Asher wrote was focused, cogent, and well- organized. His final not only exhibited markedly fewer grammatical/mechanical errors than did the diagnostic, but was considerably better developed.

While other factors cannot be discounted, this improvement during the semester could support the finding that the steady improvement in Mr. Asher's writing could be

attributed to his work as an editor. In fact, he credited writing the peer evaluations with teaching him how to analyze writing and apply those principles to his own work, thereby improving it.

Case Study No. 2—Kathryn Eiram

Ms. Eiram was an eighteen-year-old, second semester freshman while enrolled in English 1002. At the beginning of the semester, she planned to enter the College of Business; however, an emergency medical problem mid-semester inspired her to switch to a nursing major. This change to a more nurturing profession was not surprising because Ms. Eiram epitomized the nurturing, empathetic editor. Her editorial commentary demonstrated a connection between herself and all others (teacher and students) in the class.

This attachment can be gauged in several ways. Her writer's survey shows that she was interested in reading "books about people my age," indicating an awareness of group identity. She was very task-oriented and conscientious, indicative of concern for the expectations of another. For instance, if Ms. Eiram was facing a two-week writing deadline, her pattern would be to "write the rough draft, read over it, make corrections, make the second draft, read over it, make corrections, write the

final draft." She looked to the teacher for direction, asking (in her pre-semester writing inventory) that Ms. Caprio "tell me what I am doing wrong and give me suggestions on how to improve." This comment exhibits an innate desire to please the teacher.

Ms. Eiram epitomized the type of student Melanie Sperling and Sarah Warshauer Freedman discuss in "A Good Girl Writes Like a Good Girl." Their ethnographic study addresses the communicative difficulties and power imbalance inherent in student/teacher *conversations.* In the case of Lisa (Sperling and Freedman's subject), this imbalance of power resulted in her making corrections only to areas the teacher had marked, and following those suggestions slavishly because "Mr. Peterson [the teacher] has more experience and he probably knows what he's doing" (357). Unfortunately, Sperling and Freedman find Lisa "persists in misunderstanding many of Mr. Peterson's written comments" for a variety of reasons (356). Chief among these is the fact that "one writes in ways that reveal how compliant one is to the demands/desires of the teacher-authority" (357). As Lisa herself expressed her dilemma, the first rule of student writing was to write for other people (teachers), not to communicate an idea, but

because "they're going to grade it … you're doing it because they want you to. So it's for other people" (357).

In this comment, Lisa articulates one of the main difficulties in writing instruction. Teachers want student writing to express the students' own ideas on a subject; at the same time, the teacher must also offer rhetorical instruction. If a student's main concern is acquiring a "good" grade on a specific essay, rather than learning a replicable writing process, he/she can subvert the instructional procedure by blindly following the teacher's cues *whether or not he/she understands (or agrees with) them*. While sometimes this will result in a higher grade, the student has learned nothing substantive about writing. Although Lisa, the subject of Sperling and Freedman's study, was a high school student, her willingness to surrender authorial voice to the teacher is quite similar to Ms. Eiram's attitude. Both are too eager to please the reader by being a "good girl" to develop an identity as a writer.

Probably because Ms. Eiram shared Lisa's concern with pleasing "other people" she did not have much confidence in her writing ability. According to her pre-semester writer's inventory, the only writing strength she claimed was "grammar," while she admitted that she had problems

"developing ideas, writing to a specific audience, being creative & descriptive." Despite the fact that she felt that English 1001 taught her "how to write an essay" and that she now considered herself to be "better at writing," the three words she chose to describe her attitude toward writing in her pre-semester writer's inventory were "stressful, fear, painful."

This sense of conscientiousness, apprehension, and uncertainty pervaded her editing as well. At the end of the semester, she confessed that she felt "a little pressured about commenting on another student's work. I didn't know if I was doing a good job or not and I didn't want to tell them anything wrong." Ms. Eiram found that "commenting on the writing of others did help my own writing. I could find problems in my writing that were similar to the problems I found w/their writing."

It was fortunate that Ms. Eiram derived benefit from editing the work of her peers because her own writing was never selected for review. She regretted this (chance) exclusion because she felt that "comments on my position, opposition, refutation pattern would have been helpful b/c I had some trouble w/ that." Because she felt the other editors treated the work of the student writers with respect, she saw the editing process as positive.

Her philosophy of peer evaluation was that it should help the writer; to her, this was the primary focus of all editorial commentary. By *help*, however, she seemed to allude to the author's feelings of writing anxiety as much as any problems with the text.

Eiram edits Matthew

In her end-of-semester questionnaire, Ms. Eiram accurately noted that her comments never offended another student. Unfortunately, her fear of offending sometimes caused her to omit commentary on obvious problems rather than insult the writer. For instance, when evaluating the Matthew essay (Figure 6), she ignored problems with grammar and control of language because, "I didn't want to say your paper was so bad I couldn't read it.'"

Instead she chose a more oblique approach to the problem. As her use of third person pronouns indicates, she chose to address her remarks to the teacher rather than the writer:

> His essay is very hard to follow [RL 2]. I think he needs to make his views more clear [RL 2]. Some of the language he uses is confusing [RL 2]. The fact that he has met people who have died does not really mean much to his essay [RL 2].

In our post-semester interview, she explained that the essay had been difficult for several reasons. Because

Grading is an integral part of modern education. Grading is a presence of measuring one's achievements and is also a measurement of progress which warns the prospective scholar when effort is flagging and needs to be picked up.

There are those who wish to do away with the modern concept of grading. These people propose to institute standardized testing as a means of judging one's academic achievements. While standardized tests prove invaluable in judging intelligence and knowledge, they can be compared to a grade. Is not the number of percentage points given the same as a letter grade. Do not the tests prompt the same indication of the college academic infirmities they are attempting to do away with. Those people say grading causes lying, cheating, cramming, and deceit among students. In present experience I have found the two to go hand in hand where these matters are concerned. I have crammed for standardized testing, pouring over tomes containing "so called" hidden secrets to taking tests correctly. I have met people who have lyed to put off the test until further knowledge was gained. I have also heard many whispered narratives telling of some mischievous testee's easy way out of the test. These people also say that grading nullifies the uses of testing. As stated earlier, testing and grading are like milk and cereal, milk being grading and cereal being testing. One can certainly have milk alone, but hardly have cereal without milk. To make this clearer: a student takes an examination to gauge his progress of intelligence in a certain subject matter; this progress is marked by the amount answered correctly as compared to that answered incorrectly, unless the student's progress has been marked said student is either classed into a classification of like individuals or given a grade which corresponds to other test taker's. These people also contend that grading weeds out some people who in time could make the grade but who at the time of the evaluations did not possess the skills or knowledge needed to impress the instructor the fact that the subject material was indeed known. This point is invalid, as the same can be said for testing.

Grading promotes a struggle for academic success and creates a sense of achievement or distress dependant upon the grade received, within the graded individual. Grading is a fundamental part of education and a process which breeds both academic strife and achievement.

FIGURE 6—THE MATTHEW ESSAY

Mr. Matthew was one of the first writers evaluated, she was not yet accustomed to Ms. Caprio's evaluation procedure. She was also very uneasy with the essay because she found it "hard to read … it was hard to understand." Rather than directly address this issue, she cloaked her criticism and hoped that Mr. Matthew would interpret the remarks correctly.

This illustrates how Ms. Eiram's empathy for the writer sometimes interfered with her evaluations. Although she saw a problem, she skirted it rather than offend the writer. It also demonstrates how insecurities in her own abilities affected her commentary. Even in the sole area in which she felt herself expert, "grammar," her fear of "telling them something wrong," led her into diffuse, rather than direct, comments.

Eiram edits Tilley

Ms. Eiram began her evaluation of the Tilley essay (Figure 4) with praise: "the writer does a good job of summarizing the essay's main ideas" [PL 2]. In the next step of the evaluation, the editor was supposed to comment upon how successfully the student writer had analyzed the (published) writer's arguments. Rather than do so, the Tilley essay re-argued some issues raised by the Jacob

Neusner essay, "The Speech the Graduates Didn't Hear," instead of analyzing Neusner's rhetorical strategies.

Although Ms. Tilley's essay was only peripherally involved with an analysis of Neusner's essay, Ms. Eiram lauded Ms. Tilley's ideas about the professor/student relationship. Perhaps, she identified with Ms. Tilley's ideas so completely that she felt compelled to comment upon the essay as it was written, rather than re-direct the essay's focus; perhaps Ms. Eiram didn't realize there was a problem. For whatever reason, her comments do not re-direct the essay:

> She says that professors do not want to be bothered by the graduates [RL 1]. I think this is an important point [PL 3]. She says the graduates [have] been living in a world of fantasies [RL 1]. This makes the point of the essay clear [PL 3]. The beginning paragraph is very well introduced [PL 2]. The format of her essay is clear and organized [PL 2]. I think she did a good job of including both sides in her paper [PL 2].

Ms. Eiram's praise for the draft ignored the fact that the assignment was supposed to analyze the language of Neusner's essay, rather than re-argue the issues it raised.

In her summative comments of the Tilley essay, Ms. Eiram's comments were more direct (though not as direct as Mr. Asher's) although it is noteworthy that she addresses them to the teacher, rather than to Ms. Tilley herself:

> She doesn't describe the students that want to learn very well [RL 2]. This needs more development to be

> convincing [RL 3]. I think she needs to expand her conclusion [RL 3]. I think her paper would he better if she included information from "The Speech the Graduates Didn't Hear" throughout the paper instead of only at the beginning [RL 3]. I think she could talk more about the teachers that do care [RL 3].

Ms. Eiram's mis-direction of the comments to Ms. Caprio rather than the writer are explained in her post-semester interview.

Eiram edits Asher

Her approach to the Asher essay (Figure 3) was more direct. The essay was included in the second set of evaluations, and it was clear that Ms. Eiram had begun to develop a personal editorial style. In this set of evaluations, she directly addressed the writer and offered a few concrete suggestions, although she seldom achieved RL 3.

Ms. Eiram began her remarks to Mr. Asher by adopting Rogerian strategy: "I think your thesis statement does a good job of letting your reader know right away what your viewpoint is" (PL 2). However, immediately after this conciliatory remark she admitted that "I can't really tell who your audience is" (RL 2). She then went on to comment on the paper's lack of opposition/refutation in uncharacteristically direct words:

> I do not think you gave enough opposition & refutation evidence [RL 3]. You have plenty of support, but not enough opposition & refutation [RL 2]. Because you

> mentioned moral issues at the beginning, you should say more in the body on this [RL 3]. Where did facts come from [RL 3]?

This last remark was as close as she could bring herself to admitting that she could not accept Asher's *documentation* for marijuana legalization. Furthermore, the remarks begin to show signs of specific criticism: "not enough opposition & refutation" [RL 2].

Unfortunately, as Mr. Asher himself commented, "It's difficult to correct a problem if you don't know what it is." He found that remarks which stopped at RL 2 did not go "into detail on what was wrong … [but] just said something was wrong." While Ms. Eiram hoped that her remarks would help him with revision, he did not find them useful; their interaction provides a clear example of what happens when divergent views of how to help a writer collide. Mr. Asher wanted someone to tell him how to fix his paper; Ms. Eiram was afraid to offend him by telling him how difficult to comprehend she found his work.

The Cheerleading Editor

Ms. Eiram's comments for these essays are representative of her editorial style; they illustrate her belief that editorial analysis is done only to help the writer. Her concept of *help* placed more emphasis on the writer's psyche than on his/her prose. She seemed to regard

the editorial process as a type of pep rally. In her estimation, the best model for a good editor was not a surgeon but a cheerleader. In this capacity, she applauded what was done well and offered only general advice for what needed improvement.

Although Ms. Eiram thought that, "commenting … did help my writing (because) I could find problems in my writing that were similar," her performance on the final exam did not indicate that writing peer evaluations had helped as much as she thought. She entered the 1002 course as a slightly better than average writer exhibiting no major grammatical problems; on the diagnostic essay, she kept to the subject and supported her opinions. Her final exam was similarly structured and received a "B" as did her work in English 1002.

Case Study No. 3—Andrew Coleman

Mr. Coleman was an eighteen-year-old, second semester freshman with no declared major when he enrolled in English 1002. When I conducted the post-semester interview, he still had no major, although he now expressed a vague interest in Physical Therapy. Mr. Coleman was an affable student who considered his propensity to "get off the subject at hand!" his most serious writing weakness; however, he felt his deficiencies were almost too numerous

to mention, responding, "Where should I start?" when asked to list them.

Although he read no newspapers or magazines other than *Gentleman's* Quarterly, Mr. Coleman did enjoy reading books of the horror genre. On his pre-semester writing inventory, he volunteered the information that his favorite author was, "Stephen King … but if you were wanting someone a little older & more classical, I love Edgar Allen [sic] Poe!"

When asked to comment upon his writing strengths, he replied, "I guess it is difficult for me to list my strengths because after [English] 1001 I realize I don't have many. My one possible strength is imagination." When responding to the question of how he would manage his time if he had a writing assignment due in two weeks, Mr. Coleman's response made the sole mention of teacher feedback (among the three representative editors): "I would list my ideas, write rough draft, get that back & correct it."

This response is intriguing, particularly because it seems to indicate he felt no control over his writing process. Apparently, for Mr. Coleman writing was a completely teacher-controlled activity. In response to a teacher prompt asking for feedback on how she (the teacher)

might facilitate writing improvement, Mr. Coleman advised, "First of all, tell me what you are looking for in a paper, do not just let me start writing, because there is no telling where I may end up."

Mr. Coleman was totally unaware that he had stumbled upon one of the most valid reasons for students (or anyone) to write—because there are times when there *should be* "no telling" where the prose will "end up." He had no concept of *writing-to-know,* (writing done to clarify cognition) but obviously saw any type of writing as a test in which success or failure depended completely upon the whim of the rater/grader/teacher. Apparently, Mr. Coleman saw writing as a completely teacher-driven activity, its purpose to produce grades which would eventually cumulate in a degree. Knowledge seemed an ancillary option to the diploma.

In fact, when asked to describe the most important thing he learned about writing in the previous semester, he replied, "I learned nothing. I was told to keep trying but every time I turned in a paper, I had a bad grade." He considered "penmanship, sentence structure, but most of all a good point," to be characteristics of good writing, while bad writing occurred "when we don't do all of the above."

Mr. Coleman used "dislike, procrastinate, painful," as the three words which best described his attitude toward

writing, while "dislike, painful, difficult," were the three which best described his attitude toward writing courses. Considering his belief that writing was controlled by the teacher, it was not surprising that he found peer evaluations to be a waste of time.

Mr. Coleman had an extremely negative opinion of peer evaluations. Prior to any such evaluations in English 1002, he was asked to describe his attitude toward peer work. His response was

> I don't like it, but that is my opinion! The only reason is because I question their qualifications. Last semester, we had others read our work and this one guy who didn't write too terribly well himself would rake my writing apart … It was a waste of time to me and also my group. Others in the class may have benefitted from it but in my opinion, my work is to be graded by the teacher not the class.

It is very telling that Mr. Coleman considered peer evaluations a "grade" of the finished product, rather than an aid in a paper's composition. Because he was locked into viewing drafting as the production of a finished product instead of as part of the process of acquiring general writing knowledge, its only purpose could be the awarding of a "grade."

Although Ms. Caprio explained each time evaluations were conducted that the exercise was to assist the writer in the *process* of producing a draft (not to grade a finished product) Mr. Coleman could only conceptualize any

reading of a paper as a judgement. By this reasoning, since only the teacher was vested with the authority to award grades, student opinions were worthless.

Another reason he did not care for peer evaluations was because he questioned the ability of the other students to criticize his work. As he wrote in his end-of-semester questionnaire:

> I was not thrilled about everyone reading and criticizing my work. I do not think they were qualified. I doubt there are any future great writers in my class so I don't think I need their comments I don't like commenting on the other students … I'm not a good writer … I don't believe my comments helped anyone.

His comments probably didn't help anyone else. This is not surprising, considering his advice for students faced with the prospect of writing peer evaluations. He began his pre-semester questionnaire by admitting that if it were possible

> I would never comment on another student's work. (That is not how you make friends.) There is no such thing as constructive criticism between students. I am not qualified to critique anyone's work because I am not an English teacher and not to mention my grade in (English) 1001 was a "C". My suggestion to student evaluators is to either give it up or bull your way through it. This might sound like a cliche, but if you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything. Telling someone their weaknesses … will only discourage them even if done by constructive criticism.

Peer relationships were of such importance to this evaluator that they constrained his comments. He wanted "to

make friends"; he thought that he could best do this by avoiding conflict. Unfortunately, he was also aware of his social relationship with Ms. Caprio; thus, peer work presented a minefield for Mr. Coleman to negotiate. He had to write evaluations because the authority in the classroom (Ms. Caprio) demanded them. If he refused, he feared punishment (a bad grade). On the other hand, if he made negative comments on the other students' writing he might not "make friends." He struggled to strike an uneasy balance between these two opposing social views.

Coleman edits Tilley

His comments for this essay (Figure 4) make no mention of the fact that Ms. Tilley had not written the assigned essay (an analysis of the arguments Nuesner used) but had instead become enmeshed in a discussion of the issues raised in *"The Speech the Graduates Didn't Hear."* Because his essay on this topic had the same flaw (an attempt to rebut Nuesner's thesis instead of evaluating its construction), Mr. Coleman's failure to address this misdirection was probably not done from fear of the social implications of a negative comment. However, his own essay does illustrate how little regard he awarded peer evaluations; after participation in both the small and large group discussions of Ms. Tilley's essay, Mr. Coleman

ignored the student comments he heard on this draft and wrote a paper with the same error.

Mr. Coleman did provide 141 words of commentary on the draft. He did a competent job of identifying the main ideas in the Tilley essay and also summarized how effectively she supported each.

> Main ideas: 1) college is not challenging enough (RL 1)-she doesn't really address the idea (I can't find it) (RL 2); 2) lack of interest and caring has caused teachers to simplify courses (RL 1)-she argues because she has seen it and possibly experienced it; 3) students are not prepared for 'real world'(RL 1)-she gives ideas for reviving the spark between teachers and students which would lead to better preparation for 'real world.'

His summative remarks for the draft advise her to "develop the 4th paragraph [RL 2]," tell her that she needs a "stronger conclusion [RL 2]," and admit, "I guess I don't understand some stuff but I wrote it on your paper [RL 2]."

While he did provide 13 words of textual comments, they were brief remarks ("who? [RL 1]" "what category? [RL 1]" "who sets standards in 'real world'" [RL 3]) that mainly raised points of clarification rather redirecting the essay.

Coleman edits Jones

This draft had major flaws of omission and commission. Not only had Ms. Jones written a draft (Figure 2) with almost no opposition, but what she had written enraged most

smokers in the class. Mr. Coleman provided 78 words of commentary which alluded to the paper's deficiencies, but never went into specific detail about the paper's difficulties.

For instance, he identified both Ms. Jones's nascent arguments ("second-hand smoke is very bad for your health … smokers leave smoke & ashes in halls") before noting that the essay did not have "that much opposition" [RL 2]. Rather than provide specific suggestions, however, he was content to make a redundant summative comment: "There is a lot of support but not that much opposition. More clearer opposition. Elaborate more" [RL 2].

Although they were diagnostic level comments, these remarks were the type of boiler-plate commentary that Mr. Coleman usually offered. They provided the minimum expected by the teacher but did not give the writer much to work with. Ms. Jones evidently did not find his written comments particularly useful; she awarded them a helpfulness rating of only 2.

Coleman edits Hammond

Ms. Hammond had written a sketchy draft about the issue of gun control (Figure 7). In her conclusion, she argued in favor of the Brady Bill to limit access to impulse purchase of handguns. While she conceded that the

bill would not eliminate the crime epidemic, she advocated its passage since "after all, no one law can solve all the gun problems overnight."

Until reading his comments on this essay I had assumed that Mr. Coleman's formulaic commentary concealed ignorance, either of the assigned topic or writing strategies in general. This time, however, his remarks led me to believe otherwise. Although over half (24) of the 43 words of his remarks merely restated the thesis, Mr. Coleman wrote 14 words on the text of the draft which reflected his personal beliefs: "There is more to the 2nd Amendment than 'right to bear arms' Read it!"

This open-ended remark failed to provide Ms. Hammond with specific revision strategies because it left too much to her interpretation. It did seem to hint at an opinion on the part of the editor, a rare occurrence for Mr. Coleman. At our post-semester interview, I asked him to explain the comment.

He explained that too many people made vague references to the "right to bear arms" granted by the 2nd Amendment when discussing gun control. I pointed out that his remark was also vague; it didn't explain why the writer needed to re-examine the Amendment or how this was relevant to her argument. I also asked if he had an opinion of the Brady bill, and if he thought the 2nd Amendment was

Gun Control is a major concern to the residents of Louisiana. The United States Government has made a positive step toward cleaning up of unlawful use of guns with the passing of the Brady Bill. The Brady Bill requires a five day waiting period in all states before the purchase of a handgun may be made (Lacayo 28). This is not enough. The Louisiana Legislatures should pass a law that requires a person to receive a handgun license before they are able to purchase a gun.

Many Louisiana residents believe they need a handgun for protection purposes. Police officers disagree and have pointed out that a gun is not the best defense if children are in or near the home (Keller 10). An example of the dangers of guns for household use is the recent trial of Rodney Peairs. He was acquitted of killing a Japanese exchange student last Halloween (Keller 10). "At that time, 68 percent of the respondents (to a news telephone poll on the question of gun control) opposed stricter controls" (Keller 10).

The female gun market is being targeted more by the NRA than in present years for buying guns for protection (Berendt 43). "Playing on very real fears of rape and assault, the NRA paved the way for ladies' guns (some of which are advertised as 'dishwater-safe' and available in designer colors), neglecting to point out that women who own guns are five times more likely to kill their husbands than intruders with them, and that, according to one study, a gun kept in the home is forty-three times more likely to kill a friend or family member" (Berendt 43). Why are we allowing this to happen?

FIGURE 7—THE HAMMOND ESSAY

The Louisiana Legislature must fail to realize the demand for stricter gun control laws. "One result is that we have more criminals armed with semiautomatic and assault weapons ans a police force that is seriously outgunned" (Keller 10). What we need is real control! Prospective gun owners need to be educated on gun safety in order to purchase a gun. There needs to be a mandatory gun safety course along with a very complex written and skill test to show ability to shoot properly before anyone is given a license to purchase a handgun. Some requirements should also be an age limit and extensive background check. Louisiana has no prior licensing requirements for the purchase of handguns (Lacayo 26). There are only 10 states that require a waiting period along with a licensing requirement (Lacayo 26).

"Without easy access to guns of all kinds, could Americans go on killing one another at anything like the present rate" (Lacayo 28)? This is the obvious question. "Guns are like cars. We are so inured to their power we tend to treat them irresponsibly. We see them as commodities that we have a right to own and use them as we please. Instead, we should limit the 'right to bear arms' so that only trained, responsible citizens can buy guns for sport, recreation and protection-while those who would be most likely to use weapons detrimentally will have a much harder time getting" (Keller 10). After all, no one law can solve all the gun problems overnight.

relevant to a discussion of it. His response was that he could see, "no harm in the Brady Bill, but the 2nd Amendment isn't about it." He explained that he shared Ms. Hammond's support for the bill, but that he did not feel that the 2nd Amendment contradicted the Brady Bill in any way.

In reply to my observation that he had written an ambiguous remark, he agreed. He went on to explain that he had done so because it was his philosophy never to give his opinion when reading the drafts; he did not want the writer to know what he thought about the bill or the 2nd Amendment. Such objectivity is commendable to a point; however, in this case the writer could not interpret his comment without understanding how Mr. Coleman himself interpreted the 2nd Amendment. In the post-semester interview, he admitted that as written, his remark put the burden of comprehension on the writer.

The *Friend*ly Editor

In our post-semester interview, Mr. Coleman explained his position on peer evaluations and confessed that his oblique editorial style was by design. He confirmed that he considered peer review a waste of time since the only opinion that mattered was that of the teacher, "Because she's the one who gives the grades." He hated doing evaluations because he never wanted to offend anyone. Mr. Coleman's desire to be inoffensive placed him squarely in a social dilemma. If he didn't write evaluations, he feared that he would place his relationship with Ms. Caprio in jeopardy; if he didn't "say something nice," his social

position with the other students was at risk and "that's not how you make friends."

Although ultimately he wrote the evaluations, this reluctant conscript in the writing process campaign remained unconvinced that peers could assist with drafts. He saw student editors as pallid substitutes for the teacher; because of this perception, he thought that the other students in the class should not even try to offer substantive comments because

> That's the teacher's job. Probably none of them can write any better than I can anyway. So, how can they tell me how to make my paper better'? How can I tell them how to make their's better'? All it does is make you feel bad. I don't know why they want us to do it.

Mr. Coleman confessed that he "didn't learn anything" in the class. This tactic is confirmed by his performance on his final exam. Despite the fact that the class had researched the AIDS issue exhaustively in a research project and that Mr. Coleman knew that he would have to argue one aspect of this health disaster for the final, his final essay was poorly written.

Ms. Caprio characterized it as having "imprecise sentence structures & fuzzy thinking"; it also (in her summative comments) "ignored all the practical issues" of mandatory HIV testing. In these respects, it was quite similar to his diagnostic essay, demonstrating perhaps that his observation that he had learned nothing about writing was accurate.

3.5 TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the writer's revision helpfulness rating scale and the editors' own self evaluation of their editorial comments, I conducted a post-semester interview with Ms. Caprio. At this interview, I asked her to compare each editors' diagnostic and final exams. I then asked her to assess the three editors as students. She had many interesting observations.

> The thing I remember about all three is that they were all really conscientious about coming to class.. where they all sat in the classroom was interesting too-they all sat up towards the front … clearly they were all people who were going to attend to the task at hand.

Despite this similarity, she was also intrigued by the difference in maturity-levels among the three; another observation she made was that James Asher was "light-years" ahead of the other two. She speculated that this was partially because he was much more self-directed than were the other two.

Mr. Asher

Ms. Caprio admitted that she was surprised to learn how seriously James Asher had taken the editing assignments, "because he appeared so negative about everything." She found him puzzling in some respects, "because he was so resistant even in his body language, yet he came to class religiously, he brought his drafts, he

asked questions." She admitted that while sometimes Mr. Asher's questions seemed more like challenges she, "always had the feeling that he was trying to learn; he held up his end of the (pedagogical) bargain."

She found this attitude somewhat at variance with his body language which she felt, "seemed to indicate disdain for the class and everyone in it. He was the sort of student who leans back in his chair and almost dares you to teach him something." Despite this posture, Ms. Caprio found him particularly interesting because, "he had a sort of basic belief in the system. [So] if I said, 'this is what we're going to do and it will make you a better writer,' he believed me enough to try it." Ms. Caprio felt this undergirding tenet explained why Mr. Asher had been such a conscientious editor.

She found him to be the type of student who went into a course, "determined to get everything that he could out of it." This attitude led her to consider him one of the more mature students in the class: "If I had to guess, I'd have bet he was two or three years older than the others." (He wasn't.) She saw his editorial conscientiousness as evidence of this maturity. In her experience, more developed writers are better capable of reading and commenting on their peers' work often because they want a reciprocal arrangement with the other writers. Because

mature writers are capable of distancing themselves from their writing, they understand that criticism of their writing is not a personal attack. Therefore, an experienced writer will be suspicious of an editor who only offers generic critical comments or ambiguous praise.

Ms. Caprio has also found that mature writers will sometimes demonstrate the type of aggressive behavior Mr. Asher displayed toward Ms . Jones when they feel that the writer has not made a good-faith effort but expects his/her editor to essentially re-write the draft. She felt that Mr. Asher had "reached a maturation level that the rest of them had not reached … James was clearly more focused, more directed than the other two in your group, more organized."

She was not surprised to learn that this student had landed a highly-competitive chemical engineering internship while still a sophomore but saw this as additional proof of his clear sense of direction. The attitude he exhibited in class, according to Ms. Caprio, is the type of behavior most often demonstrated by upperclassmen, rather than by freshmen. "He was more directed; he wanted to learn. Every semester we get some like that, but they're usually older students than he was."

Ms. Eiram

Ms. Caprio found this student to be a perfect example of the kind of writer with an attitude carried-over from secondary education. She exhibited "that high school mentality—what's right what's wrong?" a preoccupation with lower-order concerns Ms. Caprio finds typical of late adolescence, "such a profile of that age-group."

Although Ms. Eiram was very shy, Ms. Caprio noted that she forced herself to sit up front because she knew that it was important to participate. Her shyness did not prevent her from participating in class discussions (albeit in a subdued fashion). As Ms. Caprio observed, "She was very involved. She gave a lot to the class; she was an expressive audience—you know, nodding, eye contact—even when she didn't have a lot of verbal comments."

Ms. Caprio attributed some of Ms. Eiram's tentativeness in class to the serious medical problem she had faced. Shortly into the spring semester, she learned that she would have to undergo exploratory surgery which could not be postponed until the semester's completion. While the outcome was favorable, it probably impacted her class performance, if for no other reason than she was forced to miss several weeks of class. These absences

prevented her from being as familiar with her classmates as the other editors. It is indicative of her conscientious approach to peer evaluations, however, that she fully participated in the process rather than attempting to use her illness as an opportunity to opt out of the procedure. She was mature enough to understand that while she had problems with writing, it was within her power to do something to correct them. Toward this end, she viewed the teacher as a resource for improvement. She did not see herself as a computer capable of printing only what another had programmed in but as an active participant in her own writing process. For this student, the instructor served as a guide, not a computer programmer; as such, the instructor could be relied upon to offer assistance but not define parameters so rigidly that the writer had no authentic voice.

For instance, because she knew that she had difficulty with counter-arguments and refutation, Ms. Eiram experimented with a role-playing technique that helped her predict what arguments a reader opposing her ideas might raise. This strategy enabled her to form counter-arguments.

Ms. Caprio observed that, despite the personal difficulties Ms. Eiram faced, grade-wise she had been a

very stable student. As a writer, her performance was steady, exhibiting neither precipitous advances or losses; if she experienced no epiphany during the semester, neither did she exhibit the erratic writing pattern of a student who occasionally blunders into drafting a good paper without the slightest idea of how this event occurred. Ms. Caprio noted that Ms. Eiram took a very methodical, disciplined approach to writing; if it was somewhat uninspired, it was replicable.

Mr. Coleman

When she learned this student was selected for intensive study, Ms. Caprio related this anecdote:

> The day of the final, he made a point of coming here (an hour before the exam) and saying, "I really enjoyed the class; I had a pleasant time, I liked you, but I didn't learn anything." And I wanted to say, "clearly you didn't because your sense of audience is non-existent if you don't know enough not to tell your teacher, 'I didn't learn anything,' right before you go to take the final! That says it all! He didn't understand that I'd much rather he had said, 'I didn't like this, but I learned a lot.' clearly he thought it was all about being liked.

Ms. Caprio felt that this incident was particularly telling because it so clearly demonstrated the importance Mr. Coleman placed on social connections.

In addition to the fact that they were fraught with social peril, peer evaluations also frustrated Mr. Coleman

because he was a firm believer in what Paulo Freire terms the "banking mode" of education. He saw the teacher as a repository of knowledge; students were supplicant recipients of that knowledge. As Ms. Caprio remembered,

> He believed that he was not a good writer, and no one else could tell him anything except the teacher, and we had all these secrets that we were hoarding to ourselves. He was one of those students who would come right up and ask, "What do you want?" and get really frustrated when I tried to get him to think for himself. He thought there was a trick to good writing and I knew it and just wouldn't tell him.

Despite the fact that Mr. Coleman asked his teacher to "tell" what she wanted, he was not a compliant student. Ms. Caprio said that his questions were often actually "a challenge-they did not really seem to be asked for purposes of information." She found this behavior "interesting, because he never gave anything, yet he had no problems with asking, 'why are we doing this [peer evaluations]? Why aren't you doing this? I'm only interested in what you have to say.'" Although she is a seasoned (27 years) teacher, she admitted, "It would have been very easy for … me to have been put on the defensive" because of Mr. Coleman's constant challenges to "anything I asked him to do."

Ms. Caprio characterized this student as having a Willy Loman–like philosophy of life–being *well-liked* was of paramount importance. She characterized Mr. Coleman's

attitude: "Make friends, be nice, b.s. your way through things." She felt that Mr. Coleman took no control of his writing because he felt it was all out of his control. He thought the writing class was all about personalities. In teacher conferences he made no attempt to imagine an audience (in contrast to Ms. Eiram); amazingly, this editor was so petrified by the social implications of writing that he could never grasp the rhetorical situation. Ms. Caprio admitted, "I don't know if that is a question of (personal) maturity or what."

3.6 CONCLUSION

The results show that the evaluation procedure was controlled both by the students' rhetorical ability and their concern about personal interactions. Not only did social factors influence the writing of the editors' comments, but these factors also affected writers' reception of the comments.

The findings about comment length were especially significant. Although writers often complained of the brevity of comments, the end-of-semester questionnaires for the students in this study seem to indicate that these complaints really signaled dissatisfaction with the specificity of the comments. Significantly, the writers

were as dissatisfied with brief compliments as they were with criticism.

An explanation for this dissatisfaction is that both social and rhetorical aspects affected the writers' perceptions of the editors' comments: it was important to the writers that they to find evidence of a connection between the editors and their texts. One way that an editor could display such a connection was to offer revision/praise level 2 or 3 comments. As Ms. Hammond observed, most writers did not object to allowing their peers to comment on their papers "as long as they really offered suggestions. If they just wrote good or okay about everything it made me mad."

These remarks point to the need for students to be prepared both rhetorically and socially for peer work. Specifically, students need training in some sort of systematic editorial taxonomy, such as the revision/praise levels presented in the current study. When students are trained in detecting an essay's key features/problems (RL L); building a diagnosis of the problem (RL 2); and selecting a specific revision strategy (RL 3) they have a theoretical framework upon which to structure the kind of specific criticism for which Ms. Hammond calls.

Also significant is that the students in the current study wanted specific praise from their peers. The three-tier taxonomy of praise proposed in the current study—ambiguous (PL 1); adjunct PL 2; and specific (PL. 3)—would provide the same type of needed structure to complimentary comments. Although many of the editors expressed concern that their remarks might offend the writers, they wrote considerably more comments (540-126) that offered critical advice than they did remarks that offered praise. Providing editors with a method to structure praise would probably result in more comments in praise of the essays.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS

4.0 OVERVIEW

In this study, editors' awareness of the social implications of peer critiquing affected and constrained the length, content, and tone of the comments. Their awareness was quite sophisticated and encompassed varied dialogues: teacher/student; writer/editor; and editor/editor. While a study limited to one section of students cannot generalize about peer evaluations, the results augment the current literature of the practice, particularly with respect to the social repercussions of evaluation and its effect upon the student evaluator.

This chapter addresses the research questions. It also comments upon the pedagogical implications of the current study, particularly with regard to the different expectations students bring to the evaluation procedure, their desire for specific revision advice/praise, and the social constraints revealed by this research.

4.1 CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS

The first research questions explore the varied social conceptions of writing evaluations that all the members of a classroom community (including the teacher) bring to peer group discussions.

1) What are students' perceptions of the social aspects of writing peer commentaries? 2) How do these

perceptions differ: (a) between students and their teacher; and (b) between class members?

Student Perceptions of the Social Aspects of Peer Work

Peer work helps students imagine how they fit into the classroom community because it allows them to see how others in the class respond to essays. Karen Spears argues that one benefit of peer work in a composition classroom is that it also "reinforces the notion that writing is not just what you end up with but the activities you undertake in creating it: the process as well as the product" (4).

This reinforcement occurs because peer groups invite readers other than the teacher into the writer/reader dialogue, and in so doing, interject other viewpoints. Thus, peer discussion groups help students imagine opposing viewpoints; they can aid students in understanding a process-oriented approach to writing. However, these benefits are more likely to occur if students have been properly trained in group dynamics. In answer to the first question, the results disclosed that students possessed a well-defined sense of the different audiences within the classroom; students in this study considered their relationship to their teacher, writers, and other editors when writing their evaluations. Their remarks sought a balance among all these perceived readers.

Teacher/student

The first important audience students considered was Ms. Caprio; she awarded grades. Students knew 10% of their essay grade was based on completing their peer evaluations, so they wanted to please the teacher. They also wanted to communicate with her because they recognized her as a writing authority; therefore, they tried to follow her directions because they wanted to become better writers.

Ms. Caprio was clear about what she expected from editors; she provided evaluation sheets (as Bruffee, 1984; Hunt, 1984; Forman and Cazden, 1985; and Spear, 1988 advocate) to guide peer evaluation. Although her intention was to focus the evaluation upon pivotal rather than trivial issues, the prompts confused some students. Some apparently perceived the evaluation prompt as an invitation to discuss the essay with the teacher rather than with the writer.

For instance one editor, Ms. Murphy, vacillated between direct addresses to Ms. Tilley in (RL 2) textual comments ("you have 2 sentences in a row that started with 'I have seen'") and (RL 1) replies to the prompt directed to Ms. Caprio, "She responds with agreement about professors not caring." Ms. Murphy was not alone in this approach; all but one (Mr. Asher) of the other editors in the study directed the first set of responses to their teacher.

In our post-semester interview, I asked another of the editors, Ms. Eiram, to explain why her comments to the first set of essays appeared to be directed to Ms. Caprio rather than the writers ("She says that professors do not want to be bothered by the graduates [RL 1] … The format of her essay is clear and well introduced"[PL 2]). Ms. Eiram admitted that she had not known how to respond to the prompt when writing the first evaluations; she had been confused as to whom answers to the prompt were to be directed. Thus even a tool to facilitate evaluation can misguide the process if students do not understand its purpose.

The editors' misreading of the evaluation prompt demonstrates one of the main difficulties in student evaluations; peer evaluation by its very name purports to be a dialogue between students alone. However, students know their teacher will read (and in some fashion judge) the comments' validity. Not surprisingly, the students in this study were concerned about Ms. Caprio's response to their editorial advice: she based 10% of their grade for each essay on their editorial comments. Some students became so caught up in performing for the teacher that their peer commentary seemed to be written more for Ms. Caprio than the essay's author.

These teacher-directed comments tended to judge the draft as a finished product. Because of this product-oriented approach, the comments were cast as summative, rather than formative, comments (a natural response if the editor was writing mainly to convince the teacher that he/she had completed the evaluation). Editors who wrote teacher-directed comments were often those overly concerned with being *correct* and following directions. Their comments modeled the elements they considered to be most important to good academic writing—complete sentences that repeated the writing prompt.

For instance, when responding to the Cash essay, Ms. Hammond's response to the evaluation prompt *"How has the writer organized his paper? (What is the purpose of each paragraph?),"* was, "The purpose of each paragraph is to explain the main idea or topic of each [RL 1]. The writer of this paper wrote a well organized paper" [PL 2]. Continuing her evaluation of this essay, she answered Ms. Caprio's prompt, *"How does the writer respond to each of the main ideas/arguments? Are there any 'gaps' in the writer's response?"* by responding, "the writer fully responds to each point without 'gaps' by being specific and using past examples" [RL 2].

Editor/writer

Students' confusion over the evaluation prompt reflected what Tobin posits; there were a variety of relationships within this classroom. These unknowingly-divergent views of the common task can undermine the evaluation process. Many of the editors in this 1002 class saw writing as an act with great social significance to the other students in the classroom community. Offering written or verbal criticism could either make or break their social reputation, at least for the three hours per week that they were in their English class. Because of my teacher-researcher status, I was able to observe how the members of the classroom community responded to those whom they deemed did not measure up to community standards of behavior for editors.

Most students in the class expected the editors to treat the drafts (and the writers' feelings) with deference; editors who did not were the recipient of eye-rolling and under-the-breath remarks from the other class members. Obviously, many class members were uncomfortable with marks they deemed to be too critical, perhaps because they feared that they might be the next recipient of such comments.

Most editors seemed afraid that finding fault with an essay would fray the social fabric of the group. To point

out an imperfection or acknowledge an unclear passage signaled that either the reader or the writer was at variance with the rest of the class, a particularly disconcerting occurrence if the evaluator could not propose a solution to the problem (and restore the writer to the community).

The reactions of most of the students in this class echoed the findings of Marion Mohr's 1984 study of the revision process; these freshman editors' uneasiness with the possibility of offending a writer stemmed partially from the fact that they were uncertain of their own critical ability. As with Mohr's pre-college subjects (who expressed anxiety about their own writing as well as their social relation to the rest of the class), this uncertainty sometimes led the freshman editors to pull their punches when offering written criticism. As Ms. Hammond observed of her peers, "Most … are so unsure about their own papers that it is [too] hard to pick out problems in someonelse's paper."

As a teacher-researcher, I had ample opportunity to observe the small group evaluation sessions; when I circulated among groups, students often asked for advice in how to phrase criticism inoffensively. On several occasions, students told me it was better to ignore a problem if the

writer's feelings might be hurt, especially if they could offer no suggestions for its remediation.

Editor/editor

This preoccupation with offense was not limited to editors' fear of affronting the writers; the adversarial perception of the evaluation process influenced editors in their (small-group) discussions with the other editors as well. Although Ms. Caprio stressed that the small groups were not obligated to arrive at a consensus, frequently students sought to align themselves with group members as a way to demonstrate that (negative) commentary was not a personal attack upon an individual writer.

In her history of American writing groups, Anne Ruggles Gere argues that small group discussions serve to reduce students' anxiety; this observation was borne out in Ms. Caprio's students. Because the students were so cognizant of peer relationships, consultation with the members of their small-group afforded a desperately-needed opportunity to rehearse their opinions before submitting them to the large discussion group.

In addition to having their views (either positive or negative) validated by the other members of their group, the small-group structure also allowed students to discuss strategies for how to tender negative commentary. The

strength they derived from the small-group discussion confirms the importance they placed on social relationship and also offers a teaching strategy for overcoming reluctant editors' reticence. As Gere notes, group discussion also reinforced the social implications of writing (as well as emboldened the editors) because it allowed editors to gain a sense of being part of a larger "literate community" as they saw how other readers responded to the same writing.

Differing Classroom Perceptions

The second research question explored differences in the social perceptions within the classroom and the different expectations for evaluations that occurred as a result; these included the different expectations and perceptions of Ms. Caprio and her students, as well as differences among students.

Teacher/student

Lad Tobin's *Writing Relationships: What Really Happens in the Composition Class* addresses the teachers's role in classroom dynamics. Tobin asserts that the teacher is responsible for establishing, monitoring, and maintaining relationships within the composition class: teacher-student, as well as student-student (15). He attests that some writing teachers "deny their tremendous authority in the classroom … [because they] are uncomfortable admitting …

that [they] hold so much power" (20). Tobin claims that a teacher can only be effective if he/she acknowledges the struggle for power, authority, and control inherent in the writing classroom.

Tobin would approve of Ms. Caprio's classroom persona. Although she never relinquished control of the classroom, she allowed students to learn about writing by providing ample opportunities to express their opinions about writing. Peer evaluations and small group work were strategies she employed to convince students that they could serve as writing authorities and become the confident writers Warnock describes.

As suggested by existing research, Ms. Caprio provided a pattern to guide her students through evaluation (Appendix A); the prompts reminded students to focus on the essays' global issues, not to serve as master proofreaders. She believed that evaluating the essays following her criteria would teach editors about effective writing, since following the prompts encouraged critical thinking.

To emphasize the importance of group work, Ms. Caprio devoted two class periods to evaluation: students were given one class period to write the individual component of her three-stage evaluation process; and she based 10% of each student's grade (for each essay) on the peer evaluations

they wrote. If students did not complete an evaluation (written comments, as well as class attendance the day of oral commentary), their grade was affected. She expected each student to take his/her role as editor seriously and provide suggestions that would help the writer revise his/her paper. Unfortunately, students' awareness of Ms. Caprio as an audience (and the perceived affect on their grade) resulted in an inadvertent subversion of the evaluation prompt. The desire to convince Ms. Caprio of their sincerity led all but one editor to direct his/her comments on the first set of essays to the teacher.

When this pattern of misdirection became apparent, Ms. Caprio explained that she expected the evaluation process to establish a dialogue between the writer and editor, not between the teacher and student. She assured students that she looked at the evaluation sheets only to determine that the assignment was completed and award points, not to judge the comments.

She also used the large group discussion circle to model responses. When editors tried to address comments to Ms. Caprio rather than directly to the writer—"I didn't understand what he meant here"—Ms. Caprio humorously refused to enter the discussion, saying "I'm just sitting here; ask him. It's not my paper." These remarks reminded students

that they were writing authorities; she expected students to take responsibility for (and to value) their own opinions.

Student/student

An additional evaluation complication was the differing social expectations that existed between students. Tobin's research describes the competitive atmosphere of his composition class; he finds that students often hesitate to improve another's paper for fear that their own might suffer in comparison.

Although I did not observe this competitive spirit, I did find that students approached evaluation with different expectations. Most students in this study felt great apprehension as their turn to be evaluated approached. For some reason, they feared the other editors would ridicule their papers.

Evaluation conscripts

This concern was so pervasive that these apprehensive students did not understand why teachers asked them to conduct peer evaluations. For example, because he thought that confidence was the most necessary component of good writing, Mr. Coleman commented he found it inexplicable that, " … one of the main exercises in college English classes allows students to tear down self-confidence." Such students valued no opinion other than that of the

teacher/grader; consequently, they expected nothing from the peer evaluation (except that they emerge with their dignity intact).

Cautious commentators

Another type of editor was socially-anxious; these editors wrote comments that had some revision value but were too general in content. Most offered suggestions which sought to improve the essay at the sentence level, rather than comments which affected the paper's global concerns. Typically, when they wrote a longer-than-average comment, it recast, rather than amplified, the previously proffered advice.

Such editors were so constrained by social concerns that they seemed more involved with the writers' feelings than with the drafts; they usually coped with this predicament by producing lengthy comments to soothe the writer. An editor who followed this pattern would repeat the same bit of revision information, attempting to justify the comment rather than explicate it. Sometimes it even resulted in an editor's offering contradictory comments.

Evaluation saboteurs

Other editors sabotaged the evaluation procedure. Because of the importance she placed on the practice, Ms. Caprio had structured the exercise to allow class time to

write the individual evaluations (the class period prior to the small/large group discussion), so that an editor might discuss his/her impressions of a paper first before an immediate audience (the other students in the small group) before facing the more intimidating audience of the large group (which included, of course, the writer). However, some editors (such as Mr. Matthew) delayed writing their individual evaluations until the day of the group discussions. By so doing, they shortchanged not only the writers, but themselves, and subverted the exercise's design.

Perhaps some wrote the evaluations while in the small groups because they misunderstood the purpose of the small groups, which was not consensus but collaboration; they wanted to ensure that their advice matched that offered by the rest of the group. Others may have delayed writing until the small group session because they were chronic procrastinators or because they doubted their evaluative ability. Whatever the reason, when the individual evaluations were not done until the time of the small group discussions, the editing procedure suffered. When editors struggled to complete their evaluation sheets in class, usually their comments (which summarized the group's ideas) were brief.

Conscientious critical thinkers

A few students' (notably Mr. Asher's) perceptions of the social aspects of peer work at first seemed at variance with the classroom consensus. Such students expected their peers to offer candid criticism of their writing, without consideration of the writers' egos; when it was not forthcoming, they felt shortchanged by the procedure, which had a direct impact on their social connections with the class.

At first glance, such students' perceptions of the social seemed completely different from most of their peers; however, the frustration and disappointment they expressed when their classmates failed to meet their expectations of specific criticism demonstrates a strong social connection. Their response to the editors when their expectations were not met were basically the same as any other writer: they felt defrauded.

These students seemed to derive little from peer evaluation, and they often found it to be a frustrating experience. However, as they struggled to write the analytical critiques that they hoped to receive, these students learned much about effective writing.

4.2 REVISION/PRAISE LEVELS

The next questions explore the students' rhetorical skills and examine the structure of their comments.

3) At which of the three (modified) Flower et al. revision levels (detecting; building; selecting) did the editors in this study offer comments most often? 4) At which of three praise levels (ambiguous; adjunct; specific) did editors offer comments most often?

Revision Level Comments

The nine editors studied wrote a total of 475 Revision Level comments. Interestingly, the total for Level 1 and Level 2 remarks was almost identical (176 RL 1; 177 RL 2). Editors wrote only 23% of comments at RL 3, the category requiring the most specific revision information; they offered only 112 RL 3 comments.

Praise Level Comments

Editors wrote only 102 total comments in praise of the essays, 10 less than the lowest single revision comment category. Almost half (49) of the comments were coded Praise Level 1; PL 2, had 40 comments. Slightly less than 8% (13) of the comments were coded PL 3, the most specific level of praise.

Differing Expectations

Since 47% (225 of the total 577 comments) were written at either RL 1 or PL 1, it is unfortunate that (according to their end-of-semester questionnaires) the writers in this

class found comments that remained at the first Revision Level (detection) or the first Praise Level (ambiguous comments) unsatisfactory.

It is significant that students' suspicions were aroused when editors made brief comments, even if those comments were positive ("good," "okay," "I liked it"). When editors did not go into detail about a paper's specific traits—either positive or negative—the writer did not trust/value the assessment. In other words, writers preferred a three-step taxonomy for praise as well as critical feedback. When complimentary comments did not provide specific praise, the writer did not trust the feedback.

Writer expectations of what constituted an effective evaluation were divergent; although most writers wanted specific advice, not all were disappointed with RL 1 or 2 comments. Some writers were satisfied with brief revision comments; typically, such students were those such as Mr. Coleman who did not value the opinions of their peers because they refused to accept other students as writing authorities.

Flower et al provide one explanation of why most writers were disappointed with cursory remarks. In their study of the revision process, the researchers note that

revision is a complex composition strategy because it requires "both skill in reading the text and on the adequacy of one's planning and … repertory of standards" (*Detection*, 29). According to Flower et al, writers trying to revise often were unable to proceed if they lacked the resources to devise and select strategies; such writers wanted specific revision suggestions.

However, as Flower and her colleagues note, offering specific advice is a complicated process, requiring critical reading, as well as rhetorical skills. Some editors wrote comments that remained at revision/praise level 1 because they lacked such skill. These editors felt compelled to make a comment of some sort but often could offer no concrete suggestions because their own writing or reading skills were not sophisticated enough to do so.

In their pre-semester questionnaires, most students indicated that they welcomed editorial suggestions. Unfortunately, in their end-of-semester questionnaires, several students remarked that the comments they had received were "worthless" for revision because the comments didn't go "into detail on what was wrong." This remark indicates that what the students in the study meant when they complained that comments were too short was that they were too short of revision content. They often did not find

problem detection alone to be of sufficient assistance if they lacked the skill to continue the revision process through diagnosis and strategy selection. As noted by Flower and her associates, "detecting a problem doesn't mean that the writer can solve it—he may not even know what the problem is" (*Detection*, 36).

4.3 SOCIAL/RHETORICAL CONVERGENCE

The final research question examined how the social implications of the evaluation exercise shaped the rhetorical advice students offered each other, and vice versa. This section offers a summative comment for each of the three editors selected for post-semester case studies.

6) What happens when students' divergent social perceptions and disparate critical abilities converge as they meet in peer groups?

How Social/Rhetorical Convergence Shaped the Comments

From the writer's viewpoint, a productive editor first had to be willing to participate in a reader/writer dialogue and offer (tactful, targeted) criticism to improve the paper. Constructive editors perceived evaluation as part of the drafting process; they did not judge the draft as a finished product. An effective editor was one capable of collaborating with the writer; he/she viewed writing as communication, not coercion (or trickery) on the part of the writer.

Ideally, an editor had to embrace the role of reader, respect the role of the writer, and attempt to decipher whatever message the writer wished to convey before offering revision advice. While this type of editor is the (teacher's) goal in evaluation, students' expectations for the procedure often vary, and when a writer who expected specific revision advice encountered an editor controlled by the desire to avoid offense, it was natural that conflict would arise.

As the previous section establishes, the writers in this study were aware of a variety of audiences for their comments. While all wanted to please Ms. Caprio, most were concerned with their peers' reaction to the comments. The majority of writers in the study were open to criticism if they were convinced that the editor was engaged with the text; however, most of the writers sought some evidence of the editors' seriousness before they were willing to accept comments and consider them in the revision of a paper. One way to accomplish this was to structure the comments as a Rogerian argument.

Rogerian structure

To convince writers that their remarks were offered to improve the paper, most effective editors offered criticism following the strategy of a Rogerian argument; to do so, the

comment began with the "common point" the editor shared with the writer (all the things the writer had done well) before offering specific suggestions for revision. Following Rogerian strategy, the editor and the writer were united in a common goal—a more effective paper. To achieve this end, an effective editor wrote comments that were both longer and more substantive than PL 1 comments such as, "yes," "looks good," or RL 2 comments as when editors wrote "add opposition," "more refutation."

As a result of this Rogerian structure, many effective comments were lengthy because the comments either contained specific revision advice or bestowed specific praise. An example of this style occurs in Ms. Kensey's analysis of the Asher essay, a paper which presented a completely one-sided argument in favor of legalization of marijuana. Ms. Kensey skillfully adopted Rogerian strategy to point out the obvious lack of opposition/refutation.

> Arguments for legalization were very strong [PL 2]. Clear, strong points to legalize in each paragraph [PL 2]. Explained points well [PL 2]. There wasn't any opposition in the paper [RL 2]. Everything supported thesis to legalize, but nothing supported opposition [RL 2].

Not all writers valued this Rogerian approach. For instance, Mr. Asher did not consider the previous remarks specific enough. He did not find Ms. Kensey's remarks helped him revise because they failed to go "into detail on what

was wrong. They just said what was wrong. It's difficult to correct a problem if you don't know what it is." This assessment of Ms. Kensey's editorial comments highlights what Flower, et al have observed about the revision process. Since Mr. Asher saw revision as a three-step process, he did not consider the advice to be helpful if it merely detected a problem area that he could not diagnose and correct.

Ms. Kensey had done as most of the other editors did: structured her comments to conform to her personal view of peer evaluations; likewise, Mr. Asher judged them according to his. Avoiding offense was her primary concern; his was the avoidance of bad prose. In pursuit of their respective goals, these students structured their comments accordingly. True to his credo, Mr. Asher valued the advice of the editors who gave him specific listings of his weaknesses and offered detailed advice. In keeping with her desire to avoid offense, Ms. Kensey awarded 15 of 20 editors the highest mark possible (a rating of "4") rather than risk offending the editors.

Evidence of Rogerian strategies

Interestingly, the adoption of a Rogerian-structured editing style often extended to the most basic aspect of the evaluation task. Socially-aware editors made an effort to write legibly, and either made obvious attempts to make

write legibly, and either made obvious attempts to make their own handwriting easily readable (printing or using clearly-legible script), or typed their comments. This observation does not equate legible handwriting with writing ability, but rather advances the idea that such acutely-legible editors exhibit a Rogerian-like awareness for the audience expectations of the editorial comments—the writer of the evaluated draft. A Rogerian-style editor exhibited concern that the reader of the suggestions would be able to easily follow the comments without having to decipher (and possibly misread) them. This act demonstrates an awareness of both the audience and the rhetorical situation. However, as Mr. Asher's response to Ms. Kensey illustrates, an oblique (Rogerian) approach was not always effective.

Fear of offense

An initial expectation preceding this research was that the editors with the most acute sense of the reader/writer dialogue would be the main beneficiaries of peer evaluation. This assumption that social awareness would lead to enhanced communicative ability underestimated how paralyzing social concerns could be to most eighteen-year-old editors.

Elizabeth Sommers finds that female students were particularly fearful of offending the writer. She claims that females often fall into a pattern of commentary which

"seem[s] to value affiliation more than feedback … because they believe a more authentic response might jeopardize the relationships within the group" (12). This kind of editor may be more concerned with interpersonal development than with improved writing. Several editors in the study fell into this mode of editorial discourse.

For instance, although she provided specific suggestions for the revision of the Lovett essay on acquaintance rape, Ms. Hammond felt compelled to contradict her own (previously-stated) advice in her final comment on the essay.

> In paragraph four you may want to talk about who will pay for and conduct these seminars [RL 3]. Do you think the senior class is almost too late to teach: maybe the education of acquaintance rape should come before then [RL 3]. Maybe suggest a class at school that teaches about rape [RL 3]. Organization: paragraph four is very informative [PL 2]. *I don't think you should change it* [PL 2]. (emphasis mine)

This comment apparently presents an editorial style controlled by fear of offense rather than concern for communication. It also illustrates how Ms. Hammond's stated approach to editing (to "be as nice" as possible "when offering suggestions") constrained her comments. This desire to be "nice" rather than instructive led her to mask her own reaction when she "received a comment that offended … but I didn't let that person know."

Ms. Hammond's desire to "be nice" is precisely how Belenky, et al. characterize the difficulty many women have when writing.

> The problem of "standards" for women, then is … women cannot help trying to produce what They [academic authorities] want, but sometimes they are wrong about what They want. … for many women the relentless effort to be good … prevent[s] the development of a more authentic voice (209).

Ms. Hammond's expectations also conform to two traits Elizabeth Sommers observed in female students: "women … tended to present their ideas as the views of one person rather than as universal truths" (5). Sommers also noted that females in the peer groups she observed often talked more than did the males. Significant, however, was *what* they talked about: "women students talked as much as they did because they tried so hard and in so many ways to help their peers … work on their papers" (5).

Expectations/Perceptions of the Case Study Editors

Although Mr. Asher assured me (in a post-semester interview) that he had "always managed to not be insulting," his peers sometimes found his remarks to be too blunt. According to one other participant, "He was rude. It seemed like he thought his paper was always perfect, & no one else's was … He … offended me." Not surprisingly, writers sometimes ignored Mr. Asher's advice because his view of

what constituted constructive criticism was too much at variance with theirs.

Just as an editor such as Mr. Asher could be hampered by evaluation expectations for criticism that differed from most of the other students, some editors allowed their comments to become so tactful that they did not aid revision. An example of this is Ms. Eiram's admission that she had ignored problems with grammar and syntax rather than risk offending the writer. Such a fear of offense led some students to adopt a vague, repetitive form of commentary: " … lot of support [PL 2] but not that much opposition [RL 2]. More clearer opposition [RL 2]. Elaborate more" [RL 2]. The previous remarks were offered by an editor, Mr. Coleman, who professed "there is no such thing as constructive criticism."

When editors like Mr. Coleman and Ms. Eiram were in a classroom community with an editor such as Mr. Asher, the opportunities for conflict were obvious.

Vulnerable Eiram

Ms. Eiram was a stellar example of an overly socially-apprehensive editor; she was so vulnerable to the idea of offending another student that she agonized over writing evaluations. Although she feared offending another student, she was too conscientious to neglect he evaluation exercise

because by so doing she ran the dual risks of offending another student and displeasing the teacher. As previously discussed in Section 3.5, she believed firmly that peer evaluation should *help* the writer; in her concept of help, however, the psyche was more important than the prose.

In our post-semester interview, she said that it had usually taken her 30-35 minutes to write each evaluation; thus she spent almost 3 hours writing her evaluations each time drafts were reviewed. Ms. Eiram admitted that although an (un-named) colleague in the class had counseled her to not spend so much time on the exercise, she felt compelled to continue her voluminous commentary throughout the semester.

Her participation in this study may have caused her to over-value the benefit it provided her own writing. She may have suspected that Ms. Caprio and I thought peer evaluations helped produce better writers; at the very least she knew that we thought they were important. Because she was so eager to please (everyone), being part of a research project may have caused her to take the evaluations even more seriously than she would have normally.

Locked-up Coleman

At the opposite end of the length/time continuum from Ms. Eiram was Mr. Coleman. No doubt this student would have

preferred to have been in a class operating in what educator Paulo Friere calls the "banking mode" of knowledge (1968). In a *banking* classroom, the teacher is the sole possessor of knowledge; he/she lectures the students, dispensing information from his/her depository of knowledge. The task of the student is to collect and "bank" as much knowledge from the teacher as possible.

Peer evaluations subvert the teacher-as-banker scenario, but they can do so only when students are active participants. Beyond active engagement in the evaluation procedure, good peer evaluators must acknowledge their obligation to participate actively in their education. Effective collaboration demands a shift from basic literacy to critical literacy; it therefore demands more of the evaluator's cognitive powers.

Although personable, Mr. Coleman demonstrated no desire to learn about writing as a process. This reflected his belief that great writers are somehow born, not made. As Ms. Caprio stated, Mr. Coleman seemed to think that teachers knew the "trick to good writing" and wouldn't share this knowledge with the students. Mr. Coleman expected the teacher to tell him what to do; he did not want to think. He often seemed frustrated by the process approach of teaching

writing; he preferred a product-oriented approach in which the teacher judged only the final product.

A portion of Mr. Coleman's frustration stemmed from an inherent component in all classroom settings, even those as open as Ms. Caprio's: the teacher awards grades. Since he knew that eventually she would evaluate/grade his final draft, Mr. Coleman saw no benefit in the critical opinions of his peers. He was clearly frustrated with the evaluation process, despite Ms. Caprio's efforts to introduce him into the multiplicity of voices in the classroom; he heard only the voice that gave the grade.

While he saw no positive effects of evaluation, he was quite aware of the possibilities for offense that were inherent to the process. To this student, writing was intensely personal; therefore, to criticize it was to attack the writer. One response on the post-semester questionnaire aptly summed up his confusion with peer evaluation:

> If you don't have something good to say, don't say anything. Telling someone their weaknesses in their paper in a criticizing manner will only discourage them, even if done by constructive criticism (that is not how you make friends). Books tell us that good writers have self confidence and I find it funny that one of the main exercises in college English classes allows students to tear down self-confidence. Hey, it just might be me.

It would be a gross understatement to describe Mr. Coleman as a reluctant participant in Ms. Caprio's

"community"; he was, however, an interesting subject for this study because his terse remarks were not offered out of lack of concern for social relationships, but rather because he was overly-aware of them.

Logical Asher

At first glance, it appeared to Ms. Caprio, the other students, and me that Mr. Asher had no sense of social interaction. My own perception was based on my classroom observations of his interaction with the other students, as well as his responses to my pre-semester and end-of-semester questionnaires.

After I carefully read his editorial responses and conducted his post-semester interview, however, I realized that Mr. Asher had a keen appreciation for social relationships. His social sense was so acute that he based his editorial observations on a strictly stratified concept of the relationships. At the core was an intrinsic, rigid list of rules that governed both participants in the evaluation process. As an editor, he felt bound to provide reflective feedback; he expected a writer to present him with a thoughtfully-crafted draft.

As long as he felt the writer had honored this unspoken contract, Mr. Asher was an exemplary editor. However, while he was intensely aware of the reader/writer dialogue in the

papers he evaluated and took his obligation to provide editorial feedback very seriously, he was swift to show his irritation when he felt that the writer had not taken the draft as seriously as did he. Consequently, his comments (while accurate) were often structured with so little regard for the recipient's feelings that they were rejected.

This response was usually not in the writer's best interests because Mr. Asher consistently offered specific suggestions for improvement which focused upon higher-order concerns (organization, content, clarity) rather than limiting remarks to the more easily-quantified lower-order concerns of spelling/grammar. Thus, Mr. Asher's comments reflected exactly the qualities that he listed as most important when completing his pre-semester peer evaluation survey: they pointed out "redundant information or confusing sentences."

Mr. Asher had the confidence and the cognitive resources to perform the technical aspects of the evaluation exercise. He viewed writing as a process with distinct stages; although he hated to do so, he revised his papers based on any criticism he deemed valid. Unfortunately, he was often impatient with his peers, perhaps because he assumed that everyone shared his editorial perspective.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF PEER GROUPS' ROLE IN CRITICAL LITERACY

Why did students respond differently to peer evaluation? Why did many students choose to adopt an editorial style of commentary that restated the evaluation prompt rather than analyze the draft? Why did some students address their comments to the teacher rather than the writer? Was it possible that despite Ms. Caprio's efforts to model substantive criticism, some students misunderstood the assignment?

Farfetched as this scenario may seem, this is precisely the conclusion at which Flower, et al. arrive in their 1990 work, *Reading to Write: Exploring a Cognitive and Social Process*. In a chapter devoted to task representation, Flower et al. state that students often have difficulty interpreting a writing assignment; the authors assert that " … [t]he genres we hold to be self-evident are not that way to everybody … we must face the fact that students do interpret, and often misunderstand, the college writing tasks they set out to do" (*Reading*, 37).

The Flower, et al. research has significant nuances for peer evaluation groups; to conduct peer evaluations successfully, the editors must be able to read (and interpret) both the student's essay and the teacher's assignment of essay and evaluation. Freshman students may

have difficulty performing the evaluation task correctly (even when they can interpret it) because writing a critique demands ***critical literacy***, the ability to blend reading and writing to achieve "well-articulated educational goals and, … involves high levels of independent thinking" (Richardson et al., 5). To be successful editors, students must first see the evaluation exercise as a *reading-to-write* assignment, then write a critique that blends assignment(s) and draft, transforming them into an original text—their evaluation.

Thus the ability to craft a cogent peer critique entails that the student do more than demonstrate the ability to read/understand a draft; it demands that the student read the draft and critique it based on pre-specified criteria. Therefore, writing a successful peer critique requires students to develop critical literacy because it forces them to recast the draft into original prose. While peer evaluations can provide the writer with information to revise his/her draft (particularly if the grammatical/rhetorical expertise of the editor exceeds that of the writer), the peer editor benefits also from the experience because writing peer evaluations aid in the acquisition of critical literacy.

This development occurs because editors must evaluate the arrangement and organization of the draft in addition to the easily-quantifiable grammatical aspects of a draft. In one such example of a three-stage editorial comment which focused on a paper's structure rather than grammar/mechanics, one of the study's editors, Ms. Murphy, identified and diagnosed the organizational difficulties of the Smith essay before she offered specific revision advice.

> The 5th paragraph doesn't make sense [RL 1]. I think paragraph #5 is out of place [RL 2]. Paragraph #6 ties in to #4 better [RL 3]. You may be able to use the fact that Taco Bell is now a smoke free business nationwide, and so is another one but I can't think of it now [RL 3].

Again, while this type of specific revision advice can only be given by a student who understands how to organize a paper, even those unable to provide specific feedback can offer more general advice, such as, "This doesn't flow." Although minimalist RL 1 and 2 comments are not as useful to a writer as comments that offer revision strategies, at least they serve as a warning that the text has problems.

Reading-to-Write

Another problem with the evaluation procedure occurred when students failed to negotiate the original essay assignment correctly. When this occurred, editors and writers had different expectations, making valid evaluation impossible.

If editors followed the Flower et al. tripartite critical reading strategy, they were not ready to read their peers' drafts until they understood the parameters of both the writing assignment and the evaluation exercise. For the cognition increase observed by Flower et al. to occur, the editors had to have a thorough understanding of both, in order that their reading be informed by pre-determined criteria, rather than their aesthetic sense alone.

After an informed reading of the draft, they proceeded to Flower's third stage of meaning negotiation and applied what they had read to produce a written text—their response to the evaluation prompt—that synthesized the draft and evaluation form in an assessment of how adroitly the writer had completed the assignment. At this stage, the editor had to judge how successfully the writer had completed the writing task and pose revision advice (or praise) based on the revision prompt. According to Flower, this recursive process of interpretation/negotiation of the expectations of a multi-layered audience consisting of the teacher and other students should enhance an effective editor's cognitive powers.

If an editor understood that awareness of the social aspects of writing meant that he/she was to give the writer feedback to facilitate exploration of a particular topic,

then the proffered editorial comments were usually helpful for revision. Conversely, if an editor thought that the purpose of peer groups was to "make friends," as did one of the students participating in the study, he/she was unlikely to offer criticism that might jeopardize those nascent friendships.

4.5 PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PEER WORK

Teachers and students must be aware of the multi-layered relationships in the writing classroom if peer evaluation is to be the powerful tool in the composition that the literature claims it to be.

Confronting the Filter of Fear

First, because most students fear hurting another student's feelings, the teacher must admit how difficult it can be to offer peer evaluation. Perhaps one way of addressing this issue is to acknowledge that the classroom community of readers and writers is not a homogeneous one. When students are aware of the different expectations within the classroom, some of the social pressure they feel as editors may be alleviated.

Give the writers a free period

If the issue of fear and the potential for offense is acknowledged in the classroom, students may find it easier to admit feelings of alienation which may affect either

editors or writers. A possible strategy to encourage editors to offer more candid assessment of the drafts is to have writers leave the room during the small group discussion segment of the evaluation procedure. I observed that the writers' presence in the classroom while the small groups met inhibited discussions even though the editors were not directly confronted with the writers while discussing the drafts in the small groups.

If writers are excused from class during the small group discussion, the varied needs of the classroom community may be better served because the editors can discuss the papers without the possibility of being overheard. This freedom could lead to more involved discussions of the papers than sometimes occur. It might also encourage recalcitrant editors to participate more actively.

It also makes it possible for an instructor to offer advice about problematic essays to the small groups at large and allows the instructor to teach editors how to structure criticism that is accurate, yet tactful. For instance, the teacher might direct students that only one other editor should corroborate unflattering comments, although any number of editors may join in complimentary comments; such a practice will minimize the writer's discomforture.

Model evaluation expectations

Part of students' pre-evaluation modeling should include instruction on realistic evaluation expectations. Students should understand that peer evaluations are not performed to enhance their social lives; however, editors need to consider writers' egos when offering comments. Such a frank discussion of the layered classroom acknowledges the different expectations members of the classroom community bring to the procedure and help students put them in proper perspective; this could encourage editors to structure evaluations for the writer instead of the teacher. At the least, it should help students understand their role in aiding revision.

Teach the three levels of revision and praise

Perhaps one way to help students acquire more realistic expectations of the evaluation process is to teach students my modified version of the Flower, et al. revision comment system. When students understand the difference between comments offered at level 1 and comments given at level 3, they become better revisors. In addition, teaching this system should help students develop their analytical abilities. The system provides students with a framework for comment structure.

In addition to teaching students to offer three-tiered revision comments, they should also be taught to offer specific praise. Initially, I was amazed that only 102 of the 577 comments coded praised an essay. Upon reflection, I realized that such an imbalance was inevitable.

According to Donald Daiker, "college composition teachers find error more attractive than excellence" (103). Daiker cites earlier research finds negative (teacher) comments far outweigh positive comments; Dragga's earlier study discovered only 51 of 864 comments written in response to 40 freshman essays offered praise. Daiker posits that this imbalance occurs because teachers are reluctant to praise anything less than perfection, lest the student think his/her paper needs no improvement. The result is that students have been conditioned (by their past experiences with teacher comments) to view evaluation as a procedure to diagnose failure rather than one which applauds success.

Students in my study expressed dissatisfaction with vague comments ("okay," "good"), which contradicts Daiker's findings that his students were satisfied with brief expressions of praise ("good"). One possible explanation for this apparent dichotomy rests upon understanding the levels of inter-classroom relations. Students readily accept their teacher as a writing authority; therefore, while they

receive teacher comments without needing to be convinced of the teacher's competency, the same cannot be said of another student. A plausible explanation for students' stated dissatisfaction with cursory comments is that peer editors (unlike teachers) had to demonstrate their critical credibility. In this study, brief peer comments evidently did not satisfy the writers' expectation for sincerity.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Despite the candor peer work is thought to engender, the comments written by the students in this study were often anything but frank. Students expectations of the procedure were shaped by their perceptions of the social implications of peer work. If they construed group work as an opportunity to make/maintain friendships, they were reluctant to offer comments that might offend the writer and jeopardize peer relationships. However, some writers were frustrated equally when the expected detailed criticisms of their drafts were not forthcoming. Writers were also dissatisfied with evaluations that mimicked the familiar teacher pattern of comment (scant commentary, brief praise) because they did not feel other students were critically competent; writers would, however, accept critical or complimentary comments if the editor targeted specific

features of an essay. In the eyes of the writer, such detailed analysis lent credibility to the editor.

One of the most striking implications of this research, then, is that peer evaluations have the best chance for success when the students have been trained prior to the first evaluation. This training must address the varied perceptions students bring to the procedure, so that together, they can share reasonable expectations for evaluation.

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APPENDIX A

Student's Name _____ Evaluator_____

Paper No. _____

Precise thesis

Awareness of audience

Sufficient, logical
support of thesis

Sufficient, logical
refutation of opposition

Clear, effective organization
Internal organization

External organization

Control and sophistication
of language

Mechanics and grammar

APPENDIX B

Name:

1. How do you feel about having other students critique (offer comments about) your papers? Do you think they are qualified to do so? Why or why not?

2. How do you feel about commenting on other students' work? Do you think you are qualified to do so? Why or why not?

3. Have you ever worked in a writing group before? Did you think it helped your writing or was it a waste of time? Please be as specific as possible.

4. If you answered "yes" to #3 (you've worked in a writing group) do you have any suggestions for student evaluators? For instance, what kind of comments helped you revise your work? If you didn't get comments that were helpful, what kind do you think might have been useful?

APPENDIX C

1. How did you feel about having other students critique (offer comments about) your writing? Did you think they were qualified to do so? Why or why not? Did your opinion change as the semester progressed?

2. How did you feel about commenting on other students' work? Did you think you were qualified to do so? Why or why not? Did your opinion change as the semester progressed?

3. Did you make a comment or offer a suggestion that offended the writer of a paper? Were you surprised by the reaction? Looking back, was there a way you could have given the suggestion without offending the writer?

4. Did commenting on the writing of others help your own writing, or do you feel that your comments only benefitted the writers? Please be as specific as possible.

5. When your own writing was evaluated, did you receive comments that helped you revise your paper? If you *didn't* get comments that were helpful, what kind do you think might have been useful? Did you feel that your peers treated your writing with respect? Please be as specific as possible.

APPENDIX D

Permission to Include You in the Study

English 1002 Spring semester 1994

Student's name: _____

Material to be used: Any drafts, prewriting, papers, diagnostics, tests, finals, paper critique sheets, critique evaluations, or classroom exercises that would be appropriate in my composition research project.

I would like permission to keep a copy of all the work described above to use in my dissertation, as well as other scholarly publications. All work will be presented completely anonymously (names will be changed). If you are willing to let me use your work, please answer the questions below. (Circle YES or NO.)

1. I am willing to allow my name to be printed in the acknowledgments section.

YES NO

2. I would be willing to participate in a brief (20 min.) private interview at the end of the semester.

YES NO

signature:_____ date: _____

Your permanent (home) address:_____

_____

Thank you for your help with my work!

Charlotte McInnis Curtis

APPENDIX E

Robyn Murphy

1. It doesn't bother me if some one else critiques my papers because I like to get a different viewpoint. Yes they are qualified because they are unbiased because they catch things you the writer won't.
2. I love it because it give me a chance to see how others feel on subjects and helps me improve my own paper. Yes because I am able to catch things that they don't.
3. Yes I have worked in a writing group and I don't believe that it was a waste of time.
4. I got different viewpoints and different ways of saying things I couldn't put into words.

---

1. I enjoyed receiving comments on my paper from my classmates. I did feel like they were qualified because they could give me suggestions that have helped them with their papers. No, my opinion didn't change throughout the semester.
2. I felt like my comments were very helpful in their writings. Yes, I do think I was qualified because we were all working on the same type of paper and I was able to give suggestions that helped me write my paper. No my opinion has not changed during the semester.
3. I do not know if my suggestions offended anyone. I do not believe that they did. I was not reacted towards after giving a suggestion.
4. I feel that my suggestions only benefitted the writer because I already looked into my paper and found the same problems before reading the other persons paper.
5. Yes, I received many good evaluations from my classmates, both verbally and written. The comments that I received were very helpful and full of good ideas. Yes I believe they treated my paper with respect because of the ideas that they gave me to help revise my paper.

R. Murphy Wr. S. Cash

"To Pass or Fail, that is the question"
1. yes, I like the beginning of the paper.

2. I think you did a great job answering to the arguments that you were given, but I felt that you agreed more than disagreed.
3. She gives personal examples at the beginning. I like your feelings toward the subject.
4. I think it was well developed but you might want to disagree more.
5. disagree more.

R. Murphy Wr. S. Tilley

"The speech the graduates didn't hear"

1. I believe so.
   a. college is a world of fantasies
   b. the professors don't care.
   c. students/teachers are in the same category.
2. She responds with agreement about professors not caring.
   She disagrees with the issue of students/teachers being in the same category.
   She never addresses the "fantasie world"
   give a suggestion toward the problems.
3. 1st-summary of the other article.
   2nd-saying that sometimes students/teachers are in the same category.
   3rd-some times teachers do care.
   4th-solution
   5th-?
4. the "fantasie world" and 3rd paragraph
5. listed on the draft.
   -develop conclusion better.
   -what was the category?

(textual comments)
What kind of category? Name
"witnessed" you have 2 sentences in a row that started with "I have seen"
Who?
This sentence tells me that only the people who sit in front of the class & answer questions are the only "good" students.
how will it do that?
and
ed

R. Murphy Wr. J. Asher

1. last paragraph
After looking at the benefits of legalizing marijuana it seems evident that it should be legalized.
2. I think the audience was tax payers in general but I was not certain or government official.
3. Yes, you had some very good ideas that were well organized and supported.
4. you gave some opposition but not very much. But for what you did give you backed up your position well.
5. well done, very clear
6. Handled well everything fell into place.
7. very good
8. second paragraph the 2nd & 3rd sentences were a little strange so I tried to show what I thought sounded better.
Thesis-state in #1-you might want to state it better in the 1 st paragraph.
Audience-stated in #2 above.
Paper as a whole- was well planed and easy to read. very strong points that are backed up well.
You might consider using some documentation. This will build up your credibility.
(textual comments)
thesis
all part of thesis
you should be proving this point
~~I don't see how this fits in this paragraph~~
Tie these 2 sentences together
You need some kind of transition word.
this sentence is really wordy
are killing
new paragraph
Can you back this up with a article because it is hard for me to ~~believe~~ except.
thesis
1. Did you have any articles that will back you up.
2. you do show how & why marijuana should be legalized.
*3. you have good strong point. maybe you should add in different drug and tell why marijuana should be legalized and they shouldn't.
4. you didn't state any opposition. tell what others might say about legalizing marijuana.

R. Murphy Wr. L. Jones

1. your position People in the residential halls should not smoke.
I not only harms the smoker's health, but it also affects the people around the smoker.
2. I couldn't tell who it was written to.
3. you showed how law makers & public places are trying to ban smoking.
4. you did agree at one point which was good and then you stated your position and it worked.
5. well set up.
6. easy to read except for a couple of places marked on the draft.
7. handled well.
8. they are written on draft.
(textual comments)
Title
thesis position about thesis
opposition
not all smokers think this.
Should be set off in quotes. it should be if it is a direct quote out of the article.
Set this up better I had no idea who David Sedaris is.
The 5th paragraph doesn't make sense.
I didn't understand where this quote fits in. What does it relate to.
If you do use a quote set it up before. Use transitions to do this.
A smoker would take offense.
-I got the feeling that you needed to add more info. towards both positions (yours & opposition).
-I really couldn't tell who you were writing this to.
-I think paragraph #5 is out of place. Paragraph #6 ties in to #4 better.
-you may be able to use the fact that Taco Bell is now a smoke free business nationwide and so is another one but I can't remember who it is.
-As a smoker myself I know that it bothers some people but I don't mean to light up a cigarette in front or around strangers who might become offended. I think the smoke free environment is a good idea.
-add 3rd page documenting your sources.

R. Murphy Wr. M. Hammond

Very strong paper
your arguments were excellent
I couldn't find any problems.
make sure you remember who your audience is.
(textual notes)
thesis
makes it sound like toy

R. Murphy Wr. A. Duiett
-I liked the 1st paragraph
-your conclusion needs to be thicker, repeat what you said in 1st paragraph, just shorter
-you might want to build up to your strongest argument
1. student involvement
2. time & money
3. law.
-organization was good
-good strong thesis
(textual comments)
all thesis
~~program~~ class
summarize what you said in the paper & 1st paragraph

R. Murphy Wr. J. Kensey

1. The state of Louisiana should pass a bill prohibiting smoking in all public restaurants to insure that nonsmokers are not exposed to hazardous secondhand smoke from the smoking sections.
2. Yes. She addresses smokers throughout the paper and also addresses state officials.
3. She gives good refutation against the idea of civil rights by showing the importance of everyone's health.
4. her organization was very clear and well organized.
5. well organized and fell into place clearly
6. Good
7. the spelling need a little correcting and I also added some words think it might sound better,

thesis: well put together
audience: smokers and state officials
support: health aspects of both smokers & non-smokers

-banning smoking in public places
Opp/Ref: the refutation was easy to understand
-I believe you souls add a little more opposition or expand what you do have
Organization: you might add more opposition

paper as a whole: well thought out strong statements. I really liked it. Being a smoker myself it did not offend me.
(textual notes)Title
opposition
spelling?
control
The State of
thesis
1. 4th page with articles listed.
2. Check on the proper way to document.
3. Some spelling mistakes.
4. I liked it a lot. very good arguments.
-conclusion needs to be stronger.

Michelle Hammond

1. I'm not too crazy about other students commenting on my work because I feel that it is a waste of time. Most everyone are so unsure about their own papers that it is so hard to pick out the problems in someone else's papers. Everyone mostly just writes the same general comments on all the papers.
2. the same as above.
3. Yes, I've worked in a writing group and have found it very effective because we were just able to split up the work and then proofread and add comments together to write a final draft.
4. I got comments about being more specific in my sentences.

Post-sem
1. It didn't bother me to let others edit my work as long as they really offered suggestions. If they just wrote good or okay about everything it made me mad.
2. The students were qualified to give comments because they were writing on the same topics and knew what needed to be in the paper.

3. Nobody let me know if I did offend them. I tried to be as nice as I could when offering suggestions. I received a comment that offended me but I didn't let that person know.
4. Commenting on others writing helped me with my papers because it gave me ideas and suggestions to remember when writing my own paper.
5. From some students that actually took the time to read my paper, I received a few good comments. If people actually gave me suggestions, I used them to revise my paper. When students just wrote "good," "needs opposition," "okay," or "I liked it," it didn't help me with my revisions.

M. Hammond Wr. S. Cash

"A proposal to Abolish grading"

1. yes, the writer of the draft provides an excellent overview of some of the essay's main ideas.
main ideas:
1) grading hinders teaching and creates bad spirit.
2) grading is inevitable
3) laziness is a way to avoid learning
2. the writer fully responds to each point without "gaps" by being specific and using past examples.
3. The purpose of each paragraph is to explain the main idea or topic of each. The writer of this paper wrote a well organized paper.
4. 1) Maybe give some examples of tests that would be given by IBM, etc.
2)could describe how to determine pass/fail borderline.
3)describe learning process for pass/fail method.
5. 1)Add in details from question #4.
2)Read out loud signals.
3)type and add in comments

M. Hammond Wr. S. Tilley

"Speech the grads didn't hear"

1. yes the writer of the draft provides an overview of the essay's main points.
main pts: 1)teachers and students in the same category

2) faculty doesn't care about the students
3) college hasn't prepared them for the future

2. the writer agrees to a certain extent to what Nuesner says about the student/teacher category but goes on to show another side of the issue. The writer argues that the teacher's really do care about the students. There wasn't much of an argument about how college prepares students for the future.
3. Each paragraph has a purpose trying to defend teachers and is very well organized.
4. When the writer talks about action being taken in paragraph 4, I think it needs some other examples to back up the statement.
5. Use some more examples or quotes from Neusner's essay and then say why you disagree. Give examples of the certain standards the students must follow. Give examples of what graduates can teach the younger generation.

M. Hammond Wr. J. Matthew

Goodman's essay

1. yes, the writer of the draft provides an overview of the essay's main ideas. Main pts:1)grades are overly important
2) Grading hinders teaching and creates a bad spirit
3) Teachers threaten students by grading

2. He does argue the points about grades being important. I don't see any gaps in the writer's response.
3. I found the paper a little unorganized. Most of the paper was crammed into one body paragraph that was hard to follow.
4. When the writer talks about Flag-point he could describe it in more detail. I wasn't sure what he was talking about. When he refers to personal experience he should write about it so the readers understand better.
5. the language or choice of words are confusing and can't be understood by everyone. He needs to state Goodman's points and then argue them. The points are hard to follow and understand.

M. Hammond Wr. R. Murphy

Thesis: Do you have to limit the assisted suicide to be performed in hospitals or could the patient's choice on where it should occur?

audience: I'm not really sure who the audience is.
support: you did a good job supporting the thesis statement.
opp/refut: you have plenty of points for and against assisted suicide.
organization: you might want to suggest some guidelines for assisted suicide when the patient is on life support and can't decide for himself.

M. Hammond Wr. Lovett

Thesis: all college freshmen should be aware of the dangers of acquaintance rape before entering college. You may want to change aware of to educate because most people are ware but don't know all the details. Is the second sentence of paragraph 1 the thesis?
audience: BESE. I think this is a very good group to target for your audience!
support: To support your thesis you may want to put more ~~emphasis~~ stress on some of the aspects of acquaintance rape. The points of opposition are developed very well especially in the second paragraph. In paragraph four you may want to talk about who will pay and conduct these seminars. Do you think the senior class is almost too late to teach: maybe the education of acquaintance rape should come before them. Maybe suggest a class at school that teaches about rape.
organization: paragraph four is very informative. I don't think you should change it.

M. Hammond Wr. L. Wilson

Thesis: The thesis is the first sentence of the paper. I thought that maybe paragraph 3 would be a good way to start your paper and then add your first paragraph.
audience: Congress. The Louisiana Legislature might be a little bit easier to convince since you have Baton Rouge articles.
Support: Another example for the increase of teenage smoking would be helpful to get a stronger point across.
Opp/Refut: Why wouldn't Congress (or LA Legislature) want to pass the law? What are the drawbacks?

Organization: The organization is very good but the paper doesn't seem to have an ending. Another short paragraph would help.

James Asher

1. That is a hard thing to say because I've gotten lots of help from some students while others were practically no help at all. In general though, the students were qualified to critique my paper.
2. I am not very good at recognizing spelling or mechanical errors, but I can offer ideas on making a sentence more clear or recognizing useless information.
3. I've worked in a group before when we all wrote a portion of the paper and the end result was dribble. It's too hard to combine different styles. Also some members will slake their responsibility (like me) and let the others do the work.
4. The most useful comments are the ones that point out redundant information or confusing sentences. Mechanical errors and spelling can also be useful but most computers do that for you.

Post-Sem

1. I have no problem with students evaluating my work. Some I felt were qualified to do so but most had no idea what they were doing.
2. I like commenting on others work, but it is difficult to do so without being insulting. Some papers I read were so bad I wanted to tell them to start over.
3. I never had anyone show disgust at my comments. I always managed to not be insulting.
4. I think that they also helped me. I learned a lot from proofing other papers. I saw what they did effectively and not effectively and used that information on my own paper.
5. I received a few useful comments, but most of them were worthless. People never went into detail on what was wrong. They just said that something was wrong. Its difficult to correct a problem if you don't know what it is.

J. Asher Wr. Cash

1. The essay does provide a reasonable, decent overview.
2. After the first paragraph the other essay is barely mentioned. You are not agreeing or disagreeing with the essay but instead, just coming up with your own ideas and expressing them.
3. The paper needs to be reorganized. The example at the beginning is invalid and should be eliminated or moved to later in the paper.
4. You never discuss any ideas of the other essay. You need to address the concepts of the other writer and agree or disagree with them.
5. Remove some of the examples or improve them. They seem to be meaningless and don't add any meat to your argument. Try to argue with the other essay more. You simply wrote a proposal paper instead of an arguing paper.

Reread the paper again because I found many fragments and other mechanical errors which make reading confusing.
(textual notes)
separate into two paragraphs
are you saying that you don't have to study to pass on the present scale?
try to get a better example.

J. Asher Wr. Tilley

1. You do provide a good summary of the essay but don't address all of the arguments of the essay later in the paper.
2. You do not address the arguments of the original essay.
3. The organization is fair but it is easy to organize such a short paper.
4. You need to develop your idea about improving the system more.
5. Try to add some more bulk to this paper. It seems to me that this paper is a good example of a paper that is done with a minimum of effort to receive a passing grade. You do not address the arguments of the original essay.

Reread this out loud because there are places where the paper sounds messy.

Go more in depth on how the author generalizes students and teachers.
(textual notes)
who's they?
Who's them?
you're generalizing

Ed. J. Asher Wr. L. Jones

Thesis-People should not smoke in Residential halls.
Audience Awareness-absolutely none (Crossed out-people who smoke in residence halls)
Thesis support-No, you only preached about the hazards of smoking. You didn't relate it to residence halls.
Refutation-No
Organization-not really
Language-This reads like a children's book. I don't know if you wrote this in 5 minutes or what, but I would recommend trashing it and beginning again.

J. Asher Wr. J. Kensey

Thesis-Louisiana should pass a bill prohibiting smoking in public restaurants.
Audience awareness-Very well aware of convincing an opposing audience.
Thesis support-very relevant and well documented facts.
opposition-you need to address opposing views more.
Internal organization-well done
External organization-nice but you introduce new information in the conclusion. Split it into multiple paragraphs.
Language-very nice
Mechanics-I don't know.

Ed. J. Asher Wr. M. Hammond

Thesis-require people to have handgun license
Audience awareness-Louisiana legislature
Thesis support-you don't support your cause enough. you talk about the hazards of owning a gun instead of how a safety course would benefit gun owners.

Opposition-I could find no argument against your idea in your paper.
(textual notes)
you might want to consider limiting the # of guns someone can own.

J. Asher R. Murphy

Thesis-you never state a thesis. You give a question but you never say if it should or should not.
Audience awareness-it was never stated, but I assume a general audience of people who oppose euthanasia.
Thesis support-try to describe some examples of people who would be aided by euthanasia.
Refutation-some
Internal organization-you will add a sentence to a paragraph that does not completely belong.
external organization-good
Language-you have excellent use of quotes. Are there any statistics on the subject that you can add?
(textual notes)
Don't state your thesis as a question say if you think it should or should not.
True but the main goal of medicine is to preserve life. Giving doctors the right to end a patient's life contradicts that goal.
You have a good point here but it sounds like you are whining/ Try to state the idea in a more informative way.
Very good quote to end the paper with.

Jenny Kensey

1. Yes, I think students are qualified to critique their peers papers. They can give objective advice. They can help find mechanical errors that the writer overlooked. They can pot things in the paper that are unclear and things that are uncohesive. Sometimes the writer can't find stuff like that.
2. I think I'm qualified to judge other students papers. I can find mechanical errors and grammar errors. I can make notes about things that seem unclear to a reader. I may not be qualified to grade the thesis and support paragraphs, but I could point out base things.
3. yes, I have worked in a group before. I didn't think it helped my writing. Some people in the group didn't do their

share of the work. They didn't do their research and one person got stuck writing it and everyone else just stuck their name on it. I don't think the assignment accomplished what it was supposed to do.
4. Comments about unclear sentences and out of place information. Student evaluators can judge of the thesis is developed and if the supporting information is organized and clear to the reader.
Post-Sem
1. I liked it. Yes. Everyone was qualified. They could pick up common errors that were helpful. No. I thought the evaluations turned out well and were helpful.
2. I didn't mind. I don't know that I was qualified to do so, but I picked up on big problems. Some minor things I might not have picked up on.
3. Yes, smokers tend to defend themselves. One person kind of attacked me after I wrote a paper to ban smoking in restaurants. I guess I could have given other possible solutions.
4. Yes. It made me look at my thesis and make sure my arguments and refutation were clear and tied into my thesis. It made me organize my material better.
5. yes. I got comments that told me what my paper was lacking and it helped me. yes, I feel like they treated my writing with respect. They told me positive things as well as negative things.

J. Kensey Wr. Tilley

"Speech the grads didn't hear"
1. yes. There are teachers that care. There are students that want to learn. One on one conferences could be beneficial.
2. There are no gaps. The ideas are supported in the paragraphs. The ideas are clear and understandable. It was easy to read. She gave some suggestions to the problem.
3. The paper was organized well. She gave a summary of the essay which was good. Then she used Rogerian to argue her point. She had good support paragraphs. They gave examples for solutions to the problems in the essay.
4. Maybe give some more examples of teacher enthusiasm and student motivation. How else would one on one conferences help students. In what way would it prepare them for the real world.

5. Give some examples to support main ideas. Conclusion is only 2 sentences long. It could summarize paper better. Maybe recap more ideas. Make her stand on the issue stronger and more clear. Explain the categories part. It confuses the reader.

J. Kensey Wr. Cash

"To pass or fail, that is the Question"
Yes, she summarized the essay. The benefits of pass/fail method of grading:
-it will keep students from getting lazy
-it will help/encourage learning
-will eliminate cramming and encourage learning
2) The writer responded well. She used her introduction to give background information and to state the main topics. Then she addressed each topic thoroughly using examples to support.
3) The paper is well organized. It has an intro. and a closing. The body is clear and informative. The paper is fluent b/c of the organization.
4)I think all of the ideas are well developed. used personal experience which helped explain.
5) I thought the paper was well written. I thought she agreed with the author of the essay. If you can agree w/ the author then it didn't have any problems that I was able to find. I just thought the paper was supposed to argue. She needs to make sure about the assignment. Needs to argue or disagree.

J. Kensey Wr. J. Asher

Thesis: Legalizing marijuana would be more beneficial to the public than keeping it legal.
Audience: public that does not use marijuana
support: 1) take market out of the hands of the street thugs & gov't control
2) drug related crimes would reduce
3) it would benefit taxpayers if gov't would tax marijuana heavily b/c it would bring in tons of money for the state and federal budgets.
4) It is an inexpensive agricultural product. It could help the environment
5) marijuana is not addictive like alcohol is.

Opp/Refut: 1) increase in violence and crime?
Organization: Arguments for legalization were very strong. Clear, strong points to legalize in each paragraph. Explained points well. There wasn't any opposition in the paper. Everything supported thesis to legalize, but nothing supported opposition.

J. Kensey Wr. L. Jones

Thesis: people in residential halls should not smoke because it is harmful to everybody's health. Maybe you could explain or mention (to expand the 1 st paragraph) the hazards of secondhand smoke. Maybe tell how it affects people around the smoker.
audience: smokers. yes b/c she wants smokers to go outside and make living in dorms safer for nonsmokers.
support: 1) smoking affects other people besides just smokers.
2) heart disease and cancer can result from secondhand smoke.
3) annoying to nonsmokers. Smokers need to be more considerate.
Opp/Refut: 1) smoking is the smoker's right
2) banning smoking will be inconvenient to smokers.

Organization: 1st ¶ might be kind of short. Maybe try to put a little more info. in introduction.
The rest of the paper was ok.
Good examples and support for arguments. You could relate more instances or examples to dorm situations. It seems like you were rushed when you wrote it. Try to be sensitive to smoker's feelings. Don't make them defensive. Use Rogerian.

J. Kensey Wr. Ring

Thesis: Students should be educated in sexuality and methods of birth control to prevent life altering mistakes.
audience: East Baton Rouge School Board
Support: 1) it would encourage kids to be more open w/ their parents and teachers.
2) it would educate kids at an early age so they could talk to their parents about it before the stage where they're too embarrassed.

Opp/Refut: 1)by teaching kids about birth control we are saying its ok.
2) abstinence is the only 100% effective and should be taught
Organization: Introduction paragraph needs to be clearer. Maybe separate into general sentences instead of throwing all the facts into one sentence. The myth/fact part confused me. It was probably the structure of it. I had to stop and keep rereading it. Slowed me down. Good examples.

J. Kensey Wr. Cortez

Thesis: If we can identify the youth that have just started drugs and represent the largest class of drug sellers we can discover a more effective prevention, like drug testing programs in every high school.
audience: high schools students and administrators
support: 1) you're not jeopardizing right to learn by agreeing to test
2) results would be confidential between the counselor and the student
3) schools should share responsibility for drug problem with the family. They should work together.
4) Gov't will pay for the program
opp/refut: 1) it violates civil rights and property.
2) drug problem should be solved in the family
3) parents don't want to pay for it if the gov't doesn't.
organization: very easy to follow. paragraphs were informative. The support and refutation jumped out at the reader. Good use of Rogerian technique.

Andrew Coleman

1. I don't like it, but that is my opinion! The only reason is because I question their qualification. Last semester we had others read our work and this one guy who didn't write too terribly well himself would take my writing apart.
2. I would never comment on another student's work. (That is not how you make friends.) There is no such thing as constructive criticism between students. I am not qualified to critique anyone's work because I am not an Eng. teacher and not to mention my grade in 1001 was a "C".
3. We grouped together quite often last semester. It was a waste of time to me and also my group. Others in the class

may have benefitted from it but in my opinion, my work is to be graded by the teacher not the class.
4. My suggestion to student evaluators is to either give it up or bull your way through it. This might sound like a cliche but if you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything. Telling someone their weaknesses in their paper in a criticizing manner will only discourage them even if done by constructive criticism. (Refer back to 2nd sent. of #2.) Books tell us that good writers have self confidence and I find it funny that one of the main exercises in college English classes allows students to tear down self-confidence. Hey it might just be me.

Post-sem
1. I was not thrilled about everyone reading and criticizing my work. I do not think they are qualified. I doubt there are any future great writers in my class so I don't think I need their comments. No!
2. I don't like commenting on the students. NO! I'm not a good writer. NO!
3. Possibly. No! Possibly
4. I don't believe my comments helped anyone.
5. I wasn't evaluated!

A. Coleman Wr. Cash

"A proposal to abolish grading"

1. yes Main ideas: 1) pass/fail system of grading
   2) is a A,B,C,D,F grading as useful & helpful
2. 1)She agrees mostly w/ pass/fail system of grading
   2)No there are no gaps
3. really good paragraphs. Each paragraph expresses a point
4. I can't find any areas
5. 1) her essay was the best (but start arguing)
   2) the paper is to argue

A. Coleman Wr. Tilley

"Speech the grads didn't hear"

1. yes Main ideas:-college is not challenging enough
   -lack of interest and caring has caused teachers to simplify courses

-students are not prepared for "real world"

2. 1st main idea: she doesn't really address the idea (I can't find it)

2nd main idea: she argues because she has seen it and possibly experienced it.

3rd main idea: she gives ideas for reviving the spark between teachers and students which would lead to better preparation for "real world"

3. She organizes the paper by writing a small summary and then writing what she agrees w/ and disagrees w/. She gives suggestions and concluded.

4. Develop 4th paragraph more so that there will be a clear description of the ways to improve the problem

5. 1) develop 4th paragraph

2) I guess I don't understand some stuff but I wrote it on your paper

3) stronger conclusion

(textual comments)

who?

what category?

"to"

Kind of redundant

who sets standards in "real world"

A. Coleman Wr. J. Asher

Thesis: the legalization of marijuana is an idea that should become a law, because its benefits far outweigh its consequences/ The only problem is that this statement is your opinion.

audience: I suppose someone who makes laws; I guess , if that is who its being written to.

support: arguments: 1) marijuana is safer than alcohol
2) legalizing marijuana will decrease crime
3) help economy

-do you have any proof of #1?

-do you actually think gangs sell only weed (cocaine & heroin are what major drug dealers sell)

opposition/refutation: the only opposition listed is it being morally incorrect

organization: there is lots of support but very little opposition.
(textual comments) Do you believe it would actually be profitable
Is this true?
I like that!
This is opposition, but you should expand on the moral issue.

A. Coleman Wr. L. Jones

Thesis: People in residential halls should not smoke.
audience: the audience is not listed. I assume that the audience are people who can change rules.
support: argument: -1) second-hand smoke is very bad for your health
2) smokers leave smoke & ashes in halls
(consideration)

opposition/refutation: it is very inconvenient for a smoker to go all the way outside to smoke

organization:- there is a lot of support but not that much opposition.
-more clearer opposition
-elaborate more
(textual comments) thesis
opposition
opposition
why?
what does that mean?
closing paragraph could be stronger

A. Coleman Wr. M. Hammond

Thesis: The United States Gov't has made a positive step towards cleaning up unlawful use of guns w/ the passing of the Brady Bill.

Audience: People of Louisiana (make it more specific, please)

support: I can't find any
opposition:

(textual comments) who says!!
they usually are
There is
There is more to the 2nd amendment than "right to bear arms" read it!

A. Coleman Wr. R. Murphy

Thesis: not listed

audience: those who have ability to change rules (Not listed)

support: -people are suffering
-kind thing to do is pull plug
-give patient control over dying
opposition:-should doctors do it?
-not easy to do

organization: lots of support, very little opposition

(textual comments) I like that

George Grant

Pre-Sem
1. I had a chance to hear the comments made by my 1001 group last semester. Their comments on my mistakes have made me become a better writer.
2. I don't know if I'm qualified or not but I try to help others as best as I can by commenting on their work.
3. I worked in a group writing last semester when we had to do a movie review. To me it helped me because I got to see what kind of writers my group were.
4. Just giving me some suggestions, so I can fix my mistakes.

Post-sem

1.It helped me to revise my paper. Most comments were helpful, but some didn't help me at all. I thought only a few were qualified to edit my paper, because only a few comments helped me.

2. I really didn't mind commenting on other's papers, because their mistakes helped me not make the same mistakes. Some of their good points on the paper helped me also. I felt I was qualified somewhat.
3. I've never written or made a comment to offend the writer. I always try to say it in a nice way.
4. Like I said in question #2, it really helped me a lot commenting on other's papers is a good way to improve your writing skills.
5. Only few evaluations helped me to revise my paper. most seem to evaluate because they had to. When they do that, it doesn't help me at all. But the ones who really took time to evaluate my paper was very helpful.

G. Grant Wr. Cash

"To pass or fail..."
1. The writer does provide a summary of the essay.
2. She agrees with the author. Grading system puts too much pressure on the students.
3. She tells her personal experiences to back up her opinions.
4. everything is good
5. none.

G. Grant Wr. Tilley

"Speech the Grads didn't hear"
1. yes, the writer does provide a summary of the essay's main ideas.
-there are teachers who fall into Neusner's category and there are those who do not fall in to Neusner's category.
-same thing for the students
2. The writer responded by talking about her agreements and disagreements. She both agrees and disagrees with the idea.
3. Brief summary/overview, writer's agreement, writer's disagreement, opinion on how we can increase the teacher's enthusiasm and student's motivation, conclusion.
4. use more examples and details to backup your agreements and disagreements.
5. Don't be too brief with your ideas. Have a stronger ending. Be more detail with your ideas, explain what the category is.

G. Grant Wr. J. Kensey

Thesis: Louisiana should pass a bill prohibiting smoking in all public restaurants to insure that nonsmokers are not exposed to hazardous secondhand smoke from the smoking section.
No suggestions
Audience: ~~yes~~ cannot tell; audience is appropriate if she wants to talk about the secondhand smoking problems, but if she wants to support the bill that prohibits the smoking in public facilities, she may want to write it to the legislature or the congress.
Opp/Support:

1) however, this solution has not proved to be efficient.
2) passive is unhealthy and dangerous for nonsmokers to breath.
3) there are 2400 cancer related deaths each year.
4) secondhand smoke may cause cancer.

(textual comments)
the two sentences seem to repeat it self [sic].

G. Grant Wr. Smith

Thesis: people in the residence halls should not smoke.
Aud: cannot tell who the audience is; specify in your paper who the audience is.
Position/support:

1) It not only harms the smoker's health, but it also affects the people around the smoker.
2) smokers need to be more considerate to the needs of others.
3) inhaling someone else's cigarette smoke can lead to deaths from heart disease and other forms of cancer.
4) Smoking in the dorm is very annoying for those who live there and do not smoke.

Try having longer Introductory paragraph. Try using more facts to support your thesis.

Ed. G. Grant Wr. Asher

Thesis: The legalization of marijuana is an idea that should become a law, because its benefits far outweigh its consequences.

Aud: could not tell; maybe the government

Position/support:

1) legalizing marijuana is that it would take the market out of the hands of street thugs and allow the gov't to control its quality and distribution.
2) giving the control of it to the gov't would help reduce its negative effects on society.
3) legalizing pot can be profitable.

Document your statistics and facts so we can have better understanding on your ideas.

G. Grant Wr. A. Dueitt

Thesis: all college freshmen should be aware of the dangers of acquaintance rape before entering college.

Audience: BESE

Arguments:

1) Inform students about several aspects of acquaintance rape.
2) parents would make their children spend time in counseling if their child was raped or accused of rape.
3) many teens do not know the legal definition of rape.

comments: the students should be educated about acquaintance rape earlier than their senior year.

Your paper makes me feel that only college freshmen get raped.
You had a lot of details to back up your ideas.
Maybe a stronger ending.
~~You keep saying the program will inform students before they enter college.~~
You have lot of arguments and refutation.

John Matthew

1. It didn't bother me. I believe they were qualified because if I could convey my message to them. What with the variety of students in class I could write to other audiences. No, my opinion didn't change.
2. It didn't bother me. Yes, I believe I was qualified to comment on their writing, because I have evaluated other students writing before. No.
3. No. No. No.
4. I think I commented on things I do well on in my writing, as I thought I wasn't qualified to comment on things I don't do well. I didn't comment on those.
5. Yes, I received helpful comments. Yes, I believe they treated my writing with respect.

J. Matthew Wr. D. Hudson

"Death Penalty's False Promise: An Eye for an Eye"

1) No the writer does not, he does however base his paper on the opposition's view that the death penalty is wrong because it is brutal, and on the fact that the author would wish for revenge if the murder hit close to home.
2. The writer responds with his own argument in a convincing manner.
3. Each paragraph furthers the writer's argument.
4. Stress the revenge factor more.
5. a) give more examples.
   b) back up arguments more.
   c) extrapolate more on the every man fears death.

J. Matthew Wr. Tilley

The Speech the Grads didn't hear

1) yes a) college graduates have lived a life of fantasy
   b) Professors have let students slide by
   c) there is one general category in which students and professors fall.

2) the writer responds to the argument of "the genera; category." The conclusion raises a new question instead of tying up the draft.

3. The writer has gone from each paragraph in a continuous manner with the exception of the conclusion, issuing arguments in each that further her point.
4. The question of furthering the teaching profession brought up in the conclusion.
5. a) Don't jump between paragraphs so quickly
b) subject/verb agreement
c) pronoun reference

J. Matthew Wr. J. Asher

1) Legalization of marijuana would reduce crime, violence and would be a valuable form of economy,
2) The public as a whole. No, the audience should be a person or groups of people who could do something to enact the law.
3) Legalizing marijuana would reduce crime and violence on the streets.
4) work on points of opposition.
5) internal-alright, but need 4).
external-good

J. Matthew Wr. M. Hammond

1. The Louisiana Legislature should pass a law that requires a person to receive a handgun license before they are able to purchase a gun.
2. legislature
3. the thesis was very good, but the writer seemed to stray from her main idea.
4. the last two ¶'s were very good, she needs to model these for the first three ¶'s.
5. internal: needs a little work with the first three ¶'s but all in all pretty good.
external: good
6. good
7. good

J. Matthew Wr. R. Murphy

thesis: Euthanasia should be used when a patient is in extreme pain and suffering.

audience awareness: should be narrowed down.

thesis support: ~~She doesn't have a specific thesis~~ Yes

Refutation: yes, she argues well for euthanasia

internal organization: good, but needs ~~to get a thesis~~ to put the thesis earlier in the paper.

external organization: good

language: good
mechanics/grammar: good

Ed. J. Matthew Wr. Lovett

Thesis: All college freshmen should be aware of the dangers of acquaintance rape before entering college.

audience awareness: high school seniors and BESE Board

thesis support: yes

refutation: yes
internal organization: yes
external organization: good

language: good
mechanics/grammar: good

Lisa Jones

1. I like the idea of peer evaluation. It's a great opportunity for others to help with your paper. It was also a great idea for Ms. Caprio to evaluate our papers.
2. It didn't bother me at all to comment on other's work. They commented on mine, therefore, the least I could do was comment on theirs. I am just as qualified to critique as they are to write. I feel my input helped them.
3. I don't think I ever offended the writer. There was one person who offended me. He could have spoken to me nicely. He could have even said the same thing but spoke in a nicer tone.

4. I felt like it helped my writing. I can evaluate my papers better. I had trouble with establishing my introduction. I saw ways other people wrote theirs, & it helped me.
5. Yes, I did receive comments that helped to revise my paper. I did not notice how forward or rude I was being in my paper. Thanks to my classmates, I was able to reword it. Everyone treated me with respect except for one person. He was rude. It seemed like he thought his paper was always perfect, & no one else's was.

L. Jones Wr. Tilley

1. Good Summary.
   Main ideas are: 1. we aren't prepared for reality
   2. respect bosses
2. Your response was good. There were no gaps in the paper. You might want to mention main idea #2.
3. Good organization!
4. Put more detail in the conclusion.
5. 1. state main idea #2.
   2. develop conclusion
   3. pick more specific words.

L. Jones Wr. Cash

1. the draft does show a summary of the essay.
The main ideas are:
   1. grades encourage cheating.
   2. grading causes bad results (effects)
2. I liked the paper. You did a very good job of pointing out the main ideas. I found no gaps in the essay.3. The paper was organized well. Good work!
4. I tried to think of things, but I couldn't. I liked the paper.
5. 1. Check punctuation. I liked everything else about it.

Ed. L. Jones Wr. Asher

Thesis: underlined on paper.
Audience awareness: citizens of the government; yes, it's appropriate b/c you are trying to legalize marijuana.
Thesis support:

1. gov't can control it and regulate it.
2. drug related crime will be reduced.
3. extra money (income)
4. reduce need to cut down trees (paper & rope)

Refutation:
opp. 1) gov't wastes money trying to control amt of marijuana.
You need more opp. Say why the gov't hasn't legalized it. There must be reasons why.

Internal organization: you need to state more opposition & refutation. I didn't think you agreed with anything. Your positions were states well.

mechanics/grammar: good
textual notes:
thesis
support
change gang thing
opp.
why

Ed. L. Jones Wr. Kensey

Thesis: Louisiana should pass a bill to prohibit smoking in public places.
Audience awareness: the Louisiana citizens. Yes, it is the appropriate audience since it is discussing the La. legislature bill.
Thesis support: 1. hazardous secondhand smoke (adults & kids)
2. smoking & non-smoking sections in restaurants are not working well.

ref/opp:
oppos. 1) smokers have right to smoke you might want to state more about the opposition. You stated how it was the smoker's right, but they should be more considerate (last paragraph)
Organization: the pattern was good. You could use more topics of opposition.
1. Thesis (background-some opposition)
2. support
3. support

4. conclusion (support, refutation)
Mechanics/grammar: grammar was good, but check spelling.
textual notes:
"O"
support
good!

Ed. L. Jones Wr. G. Grant

thesis: Underlined on paper.

Audience: I'm not sure! Is it the general public? Is it Congress? or Brady Bill Supporters? You need to state audience clearly.

Support:
-Brady Bill doesn't say it will reduce the # of murders
-People who kill don't usually buy guns themselves; they sometimes steal.
Opposition:
-Brady Bill will reduce # of guns
-require background check
-add more
Organization:
Introduction was good-great background. You need to state more opposition & state sources.

Ed. L. Jones Wr. Lovett

Thesis: all college freshmen should be aware of the dangers of acq. rape before entering college.
Audience: BESE or college freshmen-stated clear, but you need to decide which one is thesis.
Thesis support: -program is to inform students
-students need to know about aspects of acq. pare
BESE board would make enrollment mandatory to improve involvement.
Opp/Refut: opposition-not enough money or time
-would not be enough involvement
-students believe that they are already aware of acq. rape.
The 1st paragraph should be a background paragraph. I don't think you needed to state all the arguments.

Organization was clear & stated well.
This is a good paper!
textual comments:
16 is before senior year. maybe start education earlier.

Ed. L. Jones Wr. Hammond

Thesis: The Louisiana legislature should pass a law that requires a person to receive a handgun license before they are able to purchase a gun. very precise.
Audience: legislature
Thesis support: 1. the gun laws need to be stricter
2. we need real control!
3. need to have a gun safety course.
Opp/Refut: state more opposition
organization: you stated your position well. All you need to do is state more opposition. For example: -why the law won't pass?
-If it does pass, will it inconvenience others?

Ed. L. Jones Wr. Ring

Thesis: Baton Rouge Parish School Board should offer a program telling the youth about their bodies & sexuality.
Audience awareness: East Baton Rouge Parish School Board-stated clear
Thesis support: 1. kids will be more open w/parents & teachers
2. will dec. the amt of STD'd in youth (& sex).
Ref/Opp: Opp--1) Sex is O.K.
Ref--says it will educate them instead of hearing it from peers
Opp-2) Increase the decline of moral values in society
3) grow up too fast
4) abstinence is best way
(good) ref--yes, but we can't preach it w/o education
Organization-organization is good. You should put the myth & the fact that accompanies it together in a paragraph. I wouldn't list them.
Language: good. good choice of adjectives

Kathryn Eiram

Ill-no pre-semester

Post-sem

1. I think it was a good idea to have other students edit your writing. I don't think they are as qualified as the instructor, but I still think they can give helpful comments. My opinion did not change.
2. I felt a little pressured about commenting on other students work. I didn't know if I was doing a good job or not and I didn't want to tell them anything wrong. I think I was just a qualified as any other student. My opinion did not change.
3. No, nothing I suggested offended the writers.
4. Yes, I think commenting on the writing of others did help my own writing. I could find problems in my writing that were similar to the problems I found w/ their writing.
5. I never got chosen to be evaluated. I think if I would have, comments on my position, opposition, refutation pattern would have been helpful b/c I had some trouble w/ that. I feel that all the students treated everyone's writing with respect.

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Tilley
"The Speech the grads didn't hear"

1. yes, the writer does a good job of summarizing the essay's main ideas.
   -The faculty takes no pride in what they have done with the graduates
   -he says that the graduates have accomplished nothing by going to school.
2. She says that professors do not want to be bothered by the graduates. I think this is an important point. she says the graduates having been living in a world of fantasies. This makes the point of the essay clear.
3. The beginning paragraph is very well introduced. The format of her essay is clear and organized. I think she did a good job of including both sides in her paper.
4. She doesn't describe the students that want to learn very well. This needs more development to be convincing.
5. I think she needs to expand her conclusion. I think her paper would be better if she included information from "The

Speech the Graduates Didn't hear" throughout the paper instead of only at the beginning. I think she could talk more about the teachers that do care.

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Cash

"A Proposal to abolish grading"

1. yes, she does a good job of summarizing the essay's main ideas.
   -teachers threaten students by grading
   -grades are overly important
   -grading hinders teaching and creates a bad spirit.
2. I do not think it is clear that she is arguing with the essay. She makes a good point when she asks the question, "Is worrying about grades really worth it?" She does a good job of showing how grading hinders teaching.
3. She first talks about Goodman's ideas. The paragraph about the class she took fits really well into the essay.
4. The pass/fail method being an incentive to learn could be explained more clearly.
5. I do not think the transition between the last paragraph and the one before flows very good. I don't understand what she means by the learning process will never be forgotten. If it was more clear that you didn't agree with what Goodman says in her essay, the paper would be better.

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Asher

Thesis: Marijuana should be legalized. I think your thesis statement does a good job of letting your reader know right away what your viewpoint is.
Audience: I can't really tell who your audience is.
Support: Legalizing marijuana would allow the government to control its quality and distribution. Drug related crimes would be reduced.
The government would save money.
Marijuana could be used as an agricultural product.
Alcohol is legal and its effect is greater than the effect of marijuana.
Opposition/Refutation: marijuana is harmful to your health. I do not think you gave enough opposition & refutation evidence.

Organization: you have plenty of support, but not enough opposition & refutation. Because you mentioned moral issues at beginning you should say more in the body on this. Where did facts come from?

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Jones

Thesis: People in the residential halls should not smoke. I think you should propose a ban on smoking in the residence halls.
Audience: I'm not sure who your audience is. Write to residential life about proposal.
Support: harms smokers and the people around them.
Smokers need to be considerate of others.
Inhaling someone's else's cigarette smoke can lead to heart disease & other forms of cancer.
It will be easier for non-smokers to avoid secondhand smoke/
Halls are smoky, ashes on everything, individual rooms & clothes start to smell like smoke. More facts.
Opposition/Refutation: Smokers feel they have the right to smoke. Banning smoke in public places will inconvenience smokers.
Organization: I think you should mention that you would like to see smoking banned in the first paragraph. I do not think you have included enough opposition & refutation evidence.

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Hammond

Thesis: The Louisiana legislature should pass a law that requires a person to receive a handgun license before they are able to purchase a gun.
Audience: The Louisiana legislature
Support: You have good supporting information, but I think you need to relate it to your thesis more.
Opposition/refutation: I think you need more opposition and refutation.
Organization: You could mention the fact that you have to go through driver's ed. and take a written test & drive a car before you can get a license, and guns are as deadly as a vehicle.

Ed. K. Eiram Wr. Lovett

Thesis: BESE should set standards that regulate all high schools to inform students about several aspects of acquaintance rape.
Audience: BESE
Support: You have really good support. The different areas you named that the program will cover are good support for your thesis. I think that in order to make the last paragraph longer, you could tell why students should be aware of the dangers of acquaintance rape.
Opp/Refut: I think that you should tell why students would want to become involved in the first paragraph on the last page.
Organization: I think your essay is pretty well organized. You just need to add some more details to those two short paragraphs.

VITA

Charlotte McInnis Curtis has been interested in rhetoric and composition since her second grade teacher announced that it was impossible to write a complete sentence beginning with the word "because." Because even at age seven she recognized the illogic of this statement, Ms. Curtis attempted to engage the teacher in a rhetorical discussion. Although she was unsuccessful in this first attempt to arrive at a theory of discourse, Ms. Curtis has remained intrigued with all aspects of writing. She teaches a variety of writing courses and also works as a technical editor.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Charlotte McInnis Curtis

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: The Effects of Social Constraints on Peer Evaluation

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

November 8, 1995